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KRISHNA AND ORPHEUS

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THE GREAT INITIATES OF THE EAST AND WEST

BY

EDOUARD SCHURÉ

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KRISHNA

(INDIA AND THE BRAHMANIC INITIATION)

He who is ceaselessly creating the worlds is threefold. He is Brahma, the Father; Mâyâ, the Mother; and Vishnou, the Son: Essence, Substance, Life. Each contains the two others, and all three are one in the Ineffable.—*Brahmanic Doctrine: The Upanishads.*

Within thyself thou hast a sublime friend thou knowest not. God dwells within all men, though few know how to find Him. The man who sacrifices his desires and works to the Being whence proceed the principles of all things, and by whom the universe has been formed, attains to perfection by such sacrifice. For he who finds in himself his happiness, his joy and light, is one with God. Know then, that the soul which has found God is freed from re-birth and from death, from old age and from pain; such a soul drinks the waters of immortality.—*Bhagavad-Gita.*

CHAPTER I

HEROIC INDIA—THE SONS OF THE SUN AND OF THE MOON

FROM the conquest of India by the Aryans sprang one of the most brilliant civilisations this earth has ever known. The Ganges and its tributaries saw the birth of mighty empires and immense capitals, such as Ayodhya, Hastinapoura and Indraprastha. The epic accounts of the Mahâbhârata, and the popular cosmogonies of the Pouranas, which contain the most ancient historical records of India, speak in gorgeous language of the royal opulence, the heroic grandeur, and the chivalrous spirit belonging to these bygone ages. Nothing more haughty—nor anything more noble—could be conceived than one of these Aryan kings of India, standing in his war-chariot, and controlling armies of elephants, horses, and foot-soldiers. A Vedic priest consecrates his king before the assembled multitudes in the following terms: "I have brought thee out into our midst; the whole people ardently desire thee. Heaven and earth

are firm and steadfast, may the king of families be equally firm and changeless!" In a subsequent code of laws, the Manava-Dharma-S'astra, may be read: "These masters of the world, who, so eagerly bent on making away with one another, put forth their strength in the fight without ever turning to look back, after death ascend straight to heaven." Indeed, they claim to be descended from the gods, regard themselves as the rivals of the latter, and as about to become gods themselves. Filial obedience, military courage, united with a sentiment of generous protection over all men, such is man's ideal. So far as woman is concerned, the Hindu epopee scarcely ever presents her under any other character than that of the faithful spouse. Neither Greece nor the nations of the north have ever pictured in their poems such noble and lofty-souled wives as the passionate Sita or the tender, loving Damayanti.

What the Hindu epopee does not tell us is the profound mystery of the mixture of the races, and the slow inculcation of the religious ideas which brought to pass profound changes in the social organisation of Vedic India. The Aryans, pure-blooded conquerors, found themselves in the presence of considerably mixed and inferior races, in which the yellow and red types were

blended into a multiplicity of shades on a dark background. Hindu civilisation thus appears to us as a formidable mountain, bearing a melanian race at its foot, mixed nations on its sides, and the pure Aryans on its summit. Separation of the castes not being rigorously insisted on in the early ages, great mixtures took place among these peoples. The purity of the conquering race diminished more and more as time went by, though even nowadays the predominance of the Aryan type in the higher classes, and of the melanian in the lower, may be noticed. From the turbid depths of Hindu society there was always springing forth a burning vapour of passion, a mixture of languor and ferocity, like the pestilential miasma of the jungles mingled with the odour exhaled by savage beasts. The superabundant black blood has given India a colour special to itself. It has refined the race, and rendered it effeminate at the same time. The strange thing is, that in spite of this mixed blood the ruling ideas of the white race have been able to keep themselves at the top of this civilisation through so many revolutions.

Here, then, we have the ethnical basis of India clearly outlined: on the one hand, the genius of the white race with its moral signification and its

sublime metaphysical aspirations; on the other, that of the black race, with all its passionate element and dissolvent energy.

How is this double genius translated in the ancient religious history of India? The most ancient traditions speak of both a solar and a lunar dynasty. The kings of the former claimed to be descended from the sun, the latter called themselves sons of the moon. This symbolical language, however, threw a veil over two opposing religious conceptions, and signified that these two categories of sovereigns were attached to two different cults. The solar cult gave the male sex to the God of the universe. Around him was grouped the purest element in the Vedic tradition: the science of the sacred fire and of prayer, the respect due to women, the worship of ancestors, and the elective and patriarchal royalty. The lunar cult attributed to the deity the feminine sex, under which sign the religions of the Aryan cycle have ever given adoration to Nature, often to Nature blind and unconscious in her violent and terrible manifestations. This cult inclined towards idolatry and black magic, favoured polygamy and tyranny which depended on popular passion. The struggle between the sons of the moon and those of the sun, between the Kou-

ravas and the Pandavas, really form the subject of the great Hindu epopee, the Mahâbhârata, a kind of perspective résumé of the history of Aryan India before the definite constitution of Brahmanism. This struggle is full of desperate combats, strange and interminable adventures. In the middle of the epopee we find that the Kouravas, the lunar kings, are conquerors. The Pandavas, noble children of the sun and guardians of the unpolluted rites, are dethroned and banished. They wander about, in exile, hiding themselves in forests, taking refuge with anchorites, weaving clothes made of the barks of trees, and each carrying a hermit's staff in his hand.

Are the baser instincts to triumph? Are the powers of darkness, represented in the Hindu epopee by the black Rakshasas, to gain the victory over the light-giving Devas? Is tyranny on the point of crushing the élite of the land beneath its war-chariot? Will the cyclone of evil passions dash to pieces the Vedic altar and extinguish the sacred ancestral fire? No. India is only at the outset of her religious evolution. She will manifest her metaphysical and organising genius in the institution of Brahmanism. The priests who officiated for the kings and chiefs under the name of *purohitas* (the ones

appointed to perform the sacrifice of fire) had already become their advisers and their ministers. They possessed great wealth, considerable influence, still they could not have given their caste that sovereign authority, that unassailable position, loftier than the royal power itself, but for the help afforded by another class of men personifying the spirit of India in its deepest and most original elements. These men were the anchorites.

From times immemorial these ascetics lived in hermitages away in the depths of forests, by the river side, or near a mountain, close by the sacred lakes. At times they might be met with alone, and again in brotherhoods, though always united in one identical spirit. In them might be recognised the spiritual kings, the veritable masters of India. Heirs of the Rishis, the sages of former days, they alone possessed the secret interpretation of the Vedas. In them lived the genius of asceticism, occult science, and transcendental powers. To attain to such science and power they braved everything: hunger and cold, the burning sun, and all the horrors of the jungles. Defenceless in their wooden huts, they spent their days in prayer and meditation. With voice and look they summoned the serpents to their side or

removed them from their presence. They calmed the savage nature of lions and tigers. Happy the man who obtains their blessing—such a one shall have the Devas as his friends! Woe to the man who ill-treats or kills them—their malediction, so the poets say, pursues the guilty one right to his third incarnation. Kings tremble before their threats, and—curious to relate—these ascetics inspire fear even in the gods. In the Ramâyâna, Vis'vamitra, a king who has become an ascetic, acquires such power through meditation and austerity of life, that the gods trembled for their existence. Then Indra sends him the most ravishing of the Apsaras, who comes to bathe in the lake, in front of the saint's hut. The anchorite is seduced by the celestial nymph; a hero is born from their union, and for some thousands of years the existence of the universe is guaranteed. Beneath these poetical exaggerations may be divined the real and superior power of the anchorites belonging to the white race, who, with a power of unfathomable divination and mighty will, control the storm-tossed soul of India from the depths of their forests.

It was from the bosom of the confraternity of anchorites that the priestly resolution, which converted India into the most formidable of theo-

cracies, was to burst forth. The victory of spiritual over temporal power, of anchorite over king, whence arose the might of Brahmanism, was effected by a reformer of the first rank. In reconciling the genius of the white and that of the black race now struggling for supremacy, the solar and lunar worship, this divine man was the veritable creator of the national religion of India. In addition to this, this powerful genius by means of his doctrine spread abroad throughout the world a new idea, one of immense import, that of the divine word or of divinity incarnate in and manifested by man. This first of the Messiahs, this eldest of the sons of God, was Krishna.

His legend possesses the great interest of summing up and dramatising the whole of the Brahmanical doctrine. It has, however, remained, so to speak, scattered and floating about in tradition, for the very reason that plastic force is altogether foreign to the Hindu genius. The confused and mythical story of the *Vishnou-Pourana* gives us, however, historical information regarding Krishna of a nature at once individual and striking. In another direction, the *Bhagavad-Gita*—that wonderful fragment interpolated into the great poem of the Mahâbhârata, and which the Brahmans regard as one of their most sacred books—contains

in all its purity the doctrine attributed to him. It is in reading these two books that the person of the great religious initiator of India appears before me, with all the force of a living being. Accordingly I will relate the story of Krishna, drawing my material from these two sources, the first of which represents the popular tradition, and the second that of the initiates.

CHAPTER II

THE KING OF MATHURA

At the beginning of the Kali-Yuga age, about three thousand years before our era (according to the chronology of the Brahmans) the world was given up to the thirst for gold and material powers. For several centuries, says the sage of former times, Agni, the celestial fire which forms the glorious body of the Devas, and purifies the souls of mankind, had spread its ethereal effluvia over the whole earth. But the fevered breath of Kali, goddess of Desire and Death, issuing from the abysses of earth like a burning wind, then passed over the hearts of all men. There had been a reign of justice under the noble sons of Pandou, the solar kings who listened to the counsels of the sages. As victors they pardoned the conquerors, and treated them as equals. Since, however, the sons of the sun had been exterminated or driven from their thrones, and their few descendants took refuge with hermits, injustice, ambition, and hatred had gained the upper hand. Inconstant and false,

like the orb of night, whose symbol they had assumed, the lunar kings waged a merciless war on one another. One of them had finally succeeded in dominating all the rest, by reason of his singular prestige, and the terror he inspired in their hearts.

In the north of India, on the banks of a mighty river, flourished a powerful city. It contained twelve pagodas, ten palaces, and a hundred tower-flanked gates. Multi-coloured flags streamed from its lofty walls, like so many winged serpents. This was the haughty Mathura, impregnable fortress of Indra. There reigned Kansa, insatiable of soul and black of heart. He could not endure any but slaves around him. He imagined himself master only of what he had crushed to the ground, whilst what he possessed seemed nothing in comparison with what still remained for him to conquer. All the kings who acknowledged the lunar cult had paid him homage. It was Kansa's ambition, however, to bring into subjection the whole of India, from Lanka to the Himavat. To accomplish this object he formed an alliance with Kalayavana, ruler over the Vyndhia mountains, powerful monarch of the Yavanas, a yellow-faced race. A fervent disciple of the goddess Kali, Kalayavana had devoted himself to the shady arts of black

magic. He was called the friend of the Rakshasas, or the night-prowling demons, and king of the serpents, for he made use of these animals to terrify both his subjects and his foes. In the depths of a dense forest stood the temple of the goddess Kali; dug deep into the mountain was an immense black cavern, of which no one knew the secret recesses, whilst the entrance was guarded by colossal figures, with animals' heads, cut out in the rock. Here were brought such as wished to pay homage to Kalayavana, in order to obtain from him some secret power. He appeared at the entrance to the temple in the midst of a multitude of enormous serpents, which twined all round his body and raised aloft their heads at the command of his sceptre. He forced his tributaries to prostrate themselves before these animals, whose tangled heads bulged out beyond his own. At the same time he muttered some formula of mysterious meaning. Those who performed these rites and worshipped the serpents, obtained, so it was said, immense favours, and the accomplishment of all they wished for—but, in return, they fell irrevocably beneath the power of Kalayavana. Whether far away or close at hand, they remained his slaves. If they attempted to disobey him, or to escape his power, they imagined they saw appear before them the

terrible magician surrounded by his reptiles, whilst they stood paralysed by those hissing heads and fascinating eyes. Kansa asked Kalayavana to become his ally. The king of the Yavanas promised him the empire over the world on condition that he would marry his daughter.

Proud as an antelope and supple as a serpent was the daughter of the magician king—the beautiful Nysoumba, with her golden ear-pendants and shining ebony breast. Her countenance resembled a dark cloud on whose edge the moon has shed a bluish tint, her eyes flashed like lightning, whilst her ardent mouth was like the pulp of ripe red fruit with its pearly white pips. She might well have passed for Kali, the goddess of Desire, herself. Very soon she held undisputed sway over Kansa's heart; breathing on his passions she converted them into a fiery brazier. Kansa's palace was full of women of every hue, but he listened to none except Nysoumba.

"If only thou gavest me a son, I would make him my heir; then I should be master of the earth, and should fear no one."

And yet no son was born to Nysoumba, whereat her heart grew sore. She envied Kansa's other wives, whose nuptials had been blessed with offspring. She caused her father to multiply

sacrifice to Kali, but her womb remained barren as the sand of the sunburnt desert. Then the king of Mathura ordered that a great sacrifice of fire be offered up in the presence of the whole city, and that all the Devas be invoked. Kansa's wives and subjects attended in full pomp and ceremony. Prostrate before the fire the priests in song invoked the mighty Varouna, Indra, the As'vins, and the Maruts. The Queen Nysoumba drew near with defiant gesture and flung into the fire a handful of perfumes, uttering a magic formula in an unknown tongue. The smoke thickened, the flames wheeled in gloomy eddies of fire, and the priests exclaimed in consternation :

"O Queen ! the Rakshasas have passed over the fire, not the Devas. Thou art destined to remain barren."

Kansa in his turn drew near the fire and said to the priests :

"Tell me then which of my wives shall give birth to the master of the world ?"

At this moment Devaki, the king's sister, approached the fire. She was a simple-hearted, pure-souled virgin, whose childhood had been spent in weaving and spinning, and who passed her life as though in a dream ; though her body was on earth, her soul seemed always in heaven.

Devaki humbly sank to her knees, praying that the Devas would give a son to her brother and the beautiful Nysoumba. The priest looked in turn at the fire and at the virgin. Suddenly, in utter wonderment, he exclaimed:

"O King of Mathura! none of thy sons shall be master of the world! He shall spring from the womb of thy sister here."

Great was Kansa's consternation and Nysoumba's wrath on hearing these words. When the queen was alone with the king she said to him:

"Devaki must perish at once!"

"How can I agree to the death of my sister?" replied Kansa. "If she is under the protection of the Devas, their vengeance will recoil on me."

"Then let her rule in my stead," said Nysoumba, filled with mad anger, "and give birth to him who shall bring you to an ignominious death. For my part, I will no longer reign with a coward afraid of the Devas, I will return to my father Kalayavana."

Nysoumba's eyes flashed with rage, whilst the ear-pendants shook over her dark shining neck; she rolled on the ground, and her beautiful lithe body twisted about like a maddened serpent's. Kansa, afraid of losing her, and fascinated by a

terrible voluptuousness, was tortured by a new-born desire.

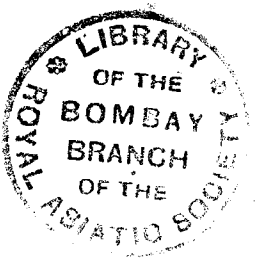
"Devaki shall perish," he said, "if only you will not leave me."

A flash of triumph shone in Nysoumba's eyes, whilst the blood empurpled her dark countenance. Springing to her feet, she twined her supple arms round the yielding tyrant. Her ebony breasts bewitched him with the intoxicating perfumes they exhaled, and, pressing her burning lips against his own, she murmured low :

"We will offer a sacrifice to Kali, the goddess of Desire and Death ; she will give us a son who will be ruler of the world."

That very night, however, the *purohita*, leader of the sacrifices, saw King Kansa in a vision drawing his sword against his sister. He immediately betook himself to the virgin Devaki, informed her that a mortal danger threatened her, and ordered her to escape at once to the hermits. Devaki, following the instructions of the priest of the fire, and disguised as a penitent, stole from Kansa's palace and left the city of Mathura without attracting attention. Early in the morning the soldiers sought for the king's sister to put her to death. They found her room empty. The king questioned the city guards, who replied that the gates

had remained closed all night. In their sleep, however, they had seen the gloomy walls of the fortress break beneath a ray of light, and a woman, following this ray, issue from the city. Kansa now knew that Devaki was protected by an invisible power. From that day fear entered his soul, and he began to hate his sister with a mortal hatred.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CHAPTER III

THE VIRGIN DEVAKI

WHEN Devaki, clad in a garb of bark which concealed her beauty, entered the mighty solitude of the giant forests, overcome with hunger and fatigue, her limbs tottered beneath her. No sooner, however, had she tasted the fruit of the mango tree than she returned to life, as does a drooping flower beneath the dews of heaven. First she made her way beneath enormous vaults formed by massive trunks of trees, whose branches, becoming replanted in the soil, multiplied to infinity their winding arcades. Long, long she walked, sheltered from the sun's rays as though in a gloomy pagoda which offered no outlet. The humming of bees, the shrill call of amorous peacocks, and the songs of thousands of other birds invited her ever onwards. The trees increased in size, and the forest became denser and more entangled than ever. Trunk after trunk appeared in serried rank, and foliage bulged out over foliage. Now Devaki would glide into verdant paths on

which the sun shed torrents of light, whilst on the ground lay extended trunks of trees dashed to earth by some mighty storm. Again, she would halt beneath the branches of mango trees and see wreaths of bindweed and flowers all around her. Deer and panthers sported in the thickets, from time to time buffaloes would crush through the undergrowth, or a band of apes pass by with shrill cries. She walked until evening, when, above a bamboo thicket, she perceived the motionless head of a sage elephant. With an intelligent, penetrating air, he looked at the virgin, and raised his trunk as though in greeting. Then the forest lit up, and Devaki saw spread before her gaze a divinely peaceful vision, full of celestial charm and glory.

Spreading out beneath her feet lay a pond, strewn with lotus flowers and blue nenuphars ; its azure bosom resembled a second sky in the midst of that mighty foliage. Chaste storks, to all appearance plunged in deep reverie, stood motionless on its banks ; a couple of gazelles were drinking its limpid waters. On the opposite banks, sheltered by a grove of palm trees, could be seen the hermitage of the anchorites. A peaceful rose-coloured light seemed to envelop the lake, the forest, and the dwelling of the holy Rishis. Away on the horizon the white peak of Mount Merou towered above the

ocean of forests. The plants were quickened by the breath of an invisible stream, and the dull, rumbling thunder of a distant cataract floated along the breeze like a melodious caress.

At the end of the pond Devaki saw a barque. An anchorite of advanced age was standing in it, seemingly awaiting her. Without uttering a word he motioned to the virgin to enter, and himself took up the oars. As the barque was silently cleaving the waters, gently brushing the nenuphars, Devaki saw a female swan swimming on the pond. With bold flight a male swan, appearing in the air, began to wheel around her in mighty circles, then he dashed down on to the water close to his mate, a trembling thrill passing over his snow-white plumage. At the sight Devaki quivered throughout her being, without knowing why. The barque had now reached the opposite bank, and the lotus-eyed virgin found herself in the presence of the king of the anchorites, Vasishta.

Seated on a gazelle skin, and clad in the skin of a black antelope, his venerable aspect resembled that of a god rather than of a man. For sixty years he had fed on nothing but wild fruit. His hair and beard were white as the peaks of the Himavat, his skin transparent, and a vague look in his eyes, fixed in meditation. When he

saw Devaki, he arose and greeted her with the words :

"Devaki, sister of the renowned Kansa, we bid thee welcome. Guided by Mahâdeva, the Supreme Master, thou hast left a world of sorrow for one of bliss. Here thou art among the holy Rishis, controllers of the senses, happy in their destiny, and ever pressing on the heavenly path. Long have we awaited thee, as night awaits the dawn. For we who live in the depths of the forests are the eyes of the Devas, ever fixed on the world. Men do not see us, but we see them, and follow their deeds. The gloomy age of desire, bloodshed, and crime is raging on earth. They must be delivered, and the Devas have chosen thee as the means of their salvation. In the womb of a woman the ray of divine splendour is to receive human form."

At this moment the Rishis left the hermitage for evening prayer. The venerable Vasishta commanded them to bow to the ground before Devaki. They obeyed his will, and Vasishta continued: "This virgin is to be mother to us all, since of her is to be born the spirit which is to regenerate us." Then, turning to Devaki, he said : "Follow the Rishis, my daughter, they will conduct thee to the neighbouring pond, where the penitent sisters

dwell. Amongst them thou shalt live, and the mysteries shall be accomplished."

Devaki went to live in the hermitage, surrounded with bindweed, among the pious women who fed the tame gazelles, and spent their time in ablutions and prayers. Devaki took part in their sacrifices. An aged woman gave her secret instructions. These penitents had been ordered to clothe her like a queen, with exquisite perfumed drapery, and then to leave her to wander alone in the open forest. This forest, full of celestial perfumes and mysterious voices, attracted the maiden. At times she met processions of old anchorites returning from the stream. On seeing her they sank to their knees, then rose and continued on their way. One day, near a spring covered with a veil of rose-coloured lotuses, she noticed a young anchorite praying. As she approached he rose to his feet, fixed on her a long and sorrowful look, and moved away without a word. The grave serious faces of the old men, the image of the two swans, and the look the young anchorite had given her, haunted the virgin in her dreams. Near the spring stood a mighty-branched tree, old beyond the memory of man; this the Rishis called "the tree of life." Devaki liked to sit beneath its shade. Often would she sink to sleep there, and strange visions would

come to her. Voices sang behind the foliage: "Hail to thee, glorious Devaki! That pure fluid, emanating from the mighty soul of all things, shall come, crowned with light, and the stars shall pale before its splendour. It shall come, and life shall challenge death. It shall restore youth to all beings. It shall come, sweeter than honey or amrita, purer than the spotless lamb or the mouth of a virgin, and all hearts shall be transported with raptures of love. Glory, glory to thee, Devaki!"[1] Were these the Devas or the anchorites who sang such strains? At times she felt that some far-off influence or mysterious presence, like an invisible hand hovering above her, was impelling her to sleep. Then she fell into a deep and inexplicable slumber, from which she awoke in mingled confusion and anxiety. She looked around as though seeking some one, but always in vain. From time to time, however, she would find roses scattered over her leafy couch and a wreath of lotus flowers in her hands.

One day Devaki fell into an ecstatic condition, more profound than ever before. She heard celestial music, like an ocean of harps and divine voices. Suddenly the heavens opened in an abyss of light. Thousands of shining beings were watching over

[1] *Atharva-Veda.*

her, and in the glory of a flashing beam of light, Mahâdeva, the sun of suns, appeared to her in human form. Then, seeing herself *overshadowed* by the Spirit of the universe, she lost conciousness, and, forgetting all earthly life, in a state of happiness beyond all power to express, she conceived the divine child.[1]

When seven moons had accomplished their magic circles around the sacred forest, the chief of the anchorites caused Devaki to be summoned into his presence :—

"The will of the Devas is accomplished," he said. "Thou hast conceived in purity of heart and divine love. Virgin and mother, we greet thee. Thou

[1] At this point a note is indispensable regarding the symbolical signification of the legend, and the real origin of those who have borne in the pages of history the name of "Sons of God." According to the secret doctrine of India, which was also that of the initiates of Egypt and of Greece, the human soul is the daughter of heaven; since, before being born on earth, it has had a series of bodily and spiritual existences. The father and mother, accordingly, only engender the child's body, since its soul comes from elsewhere. This universal law is binding on all. The greatest prophets, even those in whom the divine word has spoken, cannot escape it. And really, when once the pre-existence of the soul is admitted, the question of paternity becomes merely a secondary one. What it is important to believe is that this prophet comes from a divine world, and this the true sons of God prove by their life and death. Initiates of past times have not considered it their duty to inform the ordinary public of such things. Some of those who have appeared in the world as divine messengers, were sons of initiates, their mothers had frequented the temples in order to conceive children who should be of the elect.

shalt give birth to a son, destined to be the Saviour of the world. Thy brother Kansa, however, is seeking to destroy both thyself and the tender fruit thou bearest in thy womb. He must be escaped from; the brothers will guide thee to the shepherds who dwell at the foot of Mount Merou, beneath the sweet-smelling cedars, away in the pure air of the Himavat. There thou shalt give birth to thy divine son, and shalt call him KRISHNA, the SACRED. But let him know nothing of his origin or of thine own; never speak to him of these matters. Now go, fear not, for we are keeping watch over thee."

Accordingly Devaki made her way to the shepherds of Mount Merou.

CHAPTER IV

KRISHNA'S YOUTH

AT the foot of Mount Merou extended a beautiful valley, dotted with pastures and overshadowed by mighty forests of cedars, through which passed the pure air of the Himavat. In this lofty valley dwelt a tribe of shepherds, over whom reigned the patriarch Nanda, a friend of the anchorites. It was here that Devaki found refuge from the persecutions of the tyrant of Mathura; it was here that, in Nanda's dwelling, she gave birth to her son Krishna. With the exception of Nanda, no one knew who the stranger was, nor who was the father of her son. The women of the district merely said: "He is a son of the Gandharvas.[1] The musicians of Indra must have been present at the amours of this woman, who resembles a heavenly nymph, an Apsara." The marvellous child of the unknown woman grew up among the shepherds and their flocks, beneath his mother's

[1] These are genii, who, in Hindu poetry, are regarded as presiding over love marriages.

watchful care. The shepherds called him "The Radiant," for his mere presence, his smile, and his large round eyes had the gift of scattering joy on all around. Animals, children, women, and men, all loved him, and he seemed to love them all in return, smiling on his mother, sporting with the sheep and the children of his own age, or speaking with the old men. The child Krishna knew no fear, he was extremely bold and ready to perform the most astonishing deeds. At times he would be found in the woods, stretched out on the moss, hugging young tigers to his breast, and holding their jaws open, without their making the slightest attempt to bite him. A sudden fit of abstraction would often come over him, or a strange sadness, or even a feeling of profound wonder. At such times he remained aloof from his companions, and, with a grave, fixed expression in his eyes, made no reply to any question asked him. Above all else in the world Krishna was filled with an intense love for his young mother, whose face appeared so beautiful and shining as she spoke to him of the heaven of the Devas, of heroic combats, and many other wonderful things she had learnt among the anchorites. The shepherds would say to one another, as they gently led their flocks beneath the cedars of Mount Merou : "Who is this mother and her son?

Although clad in the garb of our own wives, she has the air of a queen. This wonderful child is being brought up among our own, and yet he is quite different from the rest. Is he a genius? Is he a god? Whatever he be, he will bring us good fortune."

When Krishna was fifteen years of age, a summons came to his mother Devaki from the chief of the anchorites. One day she disappeared without bidding her son good-bye. Krishna, unable to find her anywhere, went to the patriarch Nanda, and said to him:

"Where is my mother?"

Nanda replied, with a shake of the head:

"Ask me no questions, my child. Thy mother has gone a long journey. She has returned to the land whence she came, and I do not know when she will come back."

Krishna made no reply, but sank into so profound a reverie that all the children moved away from him, as though impelled by some superstitious fear. Krishna abandoned his games and companions, and, buried in thought, went unaccompanied over Mount Merou. For several weeks he wandered about alone. One morning he reached a lofty peak covered with trees, from which the chain of the Himavat could be seen. Suddenly by his side there

appeared a tall old man, wearing a white anchorite's robe, standing in the morning light beneath the great cedars. He seemed a hundred years of age; his snow-white beard and shining forehead were majestic to behold. The child, radiant with life, and the centenarian looked at one another with steadfast gaze, the eyes of the latter resting complacently on Krishna. The child was so astonished at the sight which struck his eyes, that he stood there dumb with admiration. He seemed to know him, though this was the first time he had seen him.

"Whom seekest thou?" asked the old man, after a time.

"My mother."

"She is no longer here."

"Then where shall I find her?"

"With Him who is unchangeable."

"And how shall I find Him?"

"Seek."

"And shall I see thee again?"

"Yes; when the daughter of the Serpent drives the son of the Bull to crime, then shalt thou see me again in a purple halo. In that day shalt thou kill the Bull and crush the Serpent's head. Son of Mahadeva, know that thou and I make only one in Him! Seek Him! . . . Seek, seek ever!"

When he had finished speaking, the old man stretched out his hands in token of benediction. Then he turned slowly round, and took a few steps beneath the lofty cedars, in the direction of Himavat. Of a sudden, it seemed to Krishna that his majestic form was becoming transparent, then it began to quiver, and finally disappeared amid luminous vibrations beneath the scintillation of the delicate tapering branches.[1]

When Krishna came down from Mount Merou, he appeared like one transfigured. New energy and life shone from his entire being. Assembling his companions, he said to them: "Let us go and destroy the bulls and the serpents; come with me to defend the good and overcome the wicked." Bow in hand and sword by side, Krishna and his companions, shepherds' sons transformed into warriors, began to march through the forests and engage in combat with the wild beasts. In the depths of the woods could be heard the howlings of hyenas, jackals, and tigers, and the shouts of triumph of the young warriors over the vanquished animals. Krishna killed and tamed lions, made war on kings, and set free oppressed tribes.

[1] There is a firm belief throughout India that great ascetics can manifest themselves in visible form at a distance, whilst their physical body remains plunged in cataleptic sleep.

Deep in his heart, however, was a well of sadness; this heart contained only one mighty, mysterious, unacknowledged desire—to find his mother and see that strange sublime old man once more. He recalled to mind the words: "Has he not promised that I shall see him again when I have crushed the Serpent's head? Has he not told me that I shall find my mother near Him who never changes?" But he had fought, overcome, and killed in vain, for neither the sublime old man nor his radiant mother had again appeared before him. One day, mention was made in his presence of Kalayavana, king of the serpents. Krishna asked to fight against the most terrible of his beasts, in the presence of the black magician himself. It was said that this animal, trained by Kalayavana, had already devoured hundreds of men, and that the very sight of it sent a chill of horror through the hearts of the boldest. From the depths of Kali's mirky temple, Krishna saw a long reptile, of a greenish-blue tint, issue at Kalayavana's summons. The serpent slowly raised his huge form, puffed out his red crest, whilst a pair of piercing eyes lit up his monstrous head, helmeted with shining scales. "This serpent," said Kalayavana, "is a powerful demon, in possession of many secrets. These he will divulge only to the

one who slays him, but he kills those who prove the weaker in the combat. He has seen thee, his eyes are fixed on thee, thou art now in his power. All that remains to be done is to worship him, or perish in a foolish strife." At these words Krishna was filled with indignation; he felt that his heart was like a thunderbolt. With fixed gaze he rushed upon the serpent, seizing him below the head. Man and beast together rolled over and over on the temple steps. But before the reptile could enlace him in his folds, with a stroke of his sword Krishna lopped off his head, and, leaping aside from the still writhing body, the young conqueror, with a look of triumph, raised aloft the serpent's head in his left hand. This head still lived, and, with eyes fastened on Krishna, the mouth said: "Wherefore hast thou slain me, son of Mahâdeva? Dost thou think that truth can be found by slaying the living? Insensate, only by thine own death shalt thou find truth! Death is in life, life in death. Beware of the serpent's daughter and the blood thou hast shed. Beware! Beware!" After uttering these words, the serpent died. Krishna dropped his head on his breast, and, filled with horror, left the spot. Kalayavana said: "I have no power over this man, Kali alone can vanquish him by a charm."

After a month's ablutions and prayers on the banks of the Ganges, having purified himself in the light of the sun and the thought of Mahâdeva, Krishna returned to his native land and the shepherds of Mount Merou.

The shining orb of an autumn moon appeared over the forests of cedars, and the evening air was filled with the fragrant odours of wild lilies. Seated at the foot of a tall cedar, on the edge of a green sward, Krishna, tired with the vain struggles of earth, was dreaming of heavenly combats and of the infinitude of space. The more he thought of his glorious mother and the sublime old man, the more despicable seemed his own childish exploits, and the more living and real became his heavenly visions. He was wholly enveloped in a consoling charm, a reminiscence of the divine. From his heart rose a hymn of gratitude to Mahâdeva, pouring forth from his lips in sweet heavenly strains. Attracted by the wonderful song, the Gopis, the daughters and wives of the shepherds, issued from their dwellings. A few drew near, calling out "Krishna! Krishna!" then, abashed at their audacity, they took to flight. Gradually, becoming more and more emboldened, the women surrounded Krishna in groups, like timid inquisitive gazelles, charmed by his strains.

He, however, lost in divine reveries, saw them not. More and more excited by his songs, the Gopis began to show impatience at receiving no attention. Nichdali, Nanda's daughter, had closed her eyes and fallen into a kind of ecstasy. But Sarasvati, her sister, of a bolder nature, glided close to Devaki's son, and said in caressing accents:

"O Krishna! seest thou not that we are listening to thee, that we can no longer sleep in our dwellings? Thy melodies are full of enchantment for us, O glorious hero! We have become enslaved by thy voice; no longer can we live without thee."

"Sing on," said a young maiden, "teach us to modulate our voices to thine."

"Teach us to dance," exclaimed another.

Krishna, returning from his reverie, cast on the Gopis looks of divine benevolence. He spoke to them gently, and, taking their hands in his own, made them sit down on the sward, beneath the shadow of the mighty cedars, in the light of the gently-glowing moon. Then he related what he had seen within himself: the story of the gods and heroes, the wars of Indra, and the exploits of the divine Rama. Maidens and women listened in raptured wonder. These stories lasted the whole

night, and when the dew-tipped dawn arose over Mount Merou, and the kokilas[1] began to warble beneath the cedars, the wives and daughters of the Gopis silently returned to their dwellings. The following evening, however, as soon as the magic moon had put forth her shining orb, they returned, more eager than before. Krishna, seeing that they were becoming too entranced by what he told them, taught them to sing, and to simulate in gesture the glorious deeds of the heroes and gods. To some he gave vînas, with soul-thrilling strings; to others, sounding cymbals; and again, to others, drums, whose sound resembled the dull roll of thunder. Choosing the most beautiful, he inspired into their hearts his own thoughts. And so, with outstretched arms, gliding and moving as though in a divine dream, the sacred dancers represented the majesty of Varouna, the anger of Indra slaying the dragon, or the despair of abandoned Mâyâ. In this way the combats and the immortal glory of the gods, which Krishna had contemplated in the depths of his own nature, sprang to renewed life in these happy and enraptured women.

One morning the Gopis had dispersed in different directions. The sound of their varied instruments and their chanting happy voices was

[1] Indian cuckoo.

lost in the distance. Krishna, alone at the foot of the cedar, saw Nanda's two daughters, Sarasvati and Nichdali, draw near. They sat down by his side. Sarasvati, flinging her arms round Krishna's neck, and shaking her bracelets, said to him: "Thou hast made us the happiest of women by means of the songs and sacred dances thou hast taught us, but when once thou leavest us, we shall be the most miserable. What will become of us when we behold thee no more? O Krishna! Marry my sister and myself; we will be thy faithful wives, and our eyes shall not have the grief of losing thee." Whilst Sarasvati was speaking thus, Nichdali had her eyes closed in a state of ecstasy.

"Nichdali, wherefore dost thou close thine eyes?" asked Krishna.

"She is jealous," replied Sarasvati, laughing. "She does not wish to see my arms round thy neck."

"No," replied Nichdali with a blush. "I close mine eyes the better to contemplate thine image, which is engraved in the very depths of my being. Though thou depart, Krishna, I shall never lose thee."

Krishna had become pensive. With a smile, he unwound Sarasvati's arms from their passionate embrace. Then he looked at the sisters

in turn, and entwined his arms around their forms. First, he placed his mouth on Sarasvati's lips, then, on Nichdali's eyes. In these two long-drawn embraces the young Krishna seemed to fathom and taste of all the delights of earth. Suddenly a quiver ran through his frame, and he said :

"Thou art beautiful, Sarasvati! Thy lips possess the perfume of amber and of every flower in creation. Thou art adorable, O Nichdali! thine eyelids veil those profound regards which look into thine inmost being. I love you both; but how can I marry you, as my heart would have to be shared between you?"

"Ah! He will never love!" said Sarasvati, vexed.

"I shall only love with an eternal love."

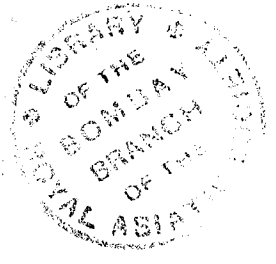
"And what is needed for you to love so?" said Nichdali, in tender accents.

Krishna rose to his feet, flames of light flashing from his eyes.

"To love with an eternal love," he said, "the light of day must vanish, the dark thunderbolt crush into my heart, and my soul escape from self to the heights of heaven!"

As he spoke he seemed to the young maidens to have grown a cubit taller. Suddenly they were

struck with fear, and returned home in tears. Krishna proceeded alone along the path to Mount Merou. On the following night the Gopis assembled once more for their wonted pastime, but they waited in vain for their master. He had disappeared, leaving them only an essence, a perfume of his being, in the songs and sacred dances.



CHAPTER V

INITIATION

AND now King Kansa, hearing that his sister Devaki had been living with the anchorites, and being unable to discover her, began to persecute them and hunt them like wild beasts. They were obliged to take refuge in the innermost and wildest parts of the forest. Thereupon their chief, old Vasishta, though a hundred years of age, set out to speak to the King of Mathura. The guards were astonished at the sight of a blind old man, guided by a gazelle he held in leash, in front of the palace gates. Filled with respect for the Rishi, they allowed him to pass. Vasishta drew near the throne on which Kansa was seated by Nysoumba's side, and said to him :

" Kansa, King of Mathura, woe to thee, son of the Bull, thou who persecutest the hermits of the holy forest ! Woe to thee, daughter of the Serpent, thou who breathest hatred into his heart. The day of thy punishment is at hand. Know that Devaki's son lives. He shall come,

covered with armour of scales that cannot be broken, and shall drive thee ignominiously from thy throne. Tremble, pass thy days in fear; this is the chastisement the Devas assign to thee."

Warriors, guards, and servants had sunk to the ground in the presence of this holy centenarian, who left the palace, under the guidance of the gazelle, without any one daring to touch him. From that day forth Kansa and Nysoumba took counsel together as to the way in which they might secretly destroy the king of the anchorites. Devaki was dead, and none, with the exception of Vasishta, knew that Krishna was her son. And yet, the rumour of his daring deeds had reached the king's ears. Kansa reflected: "I need a strong man to defend me. He who slew Kalayavana's mighty serpent will not be afraid of the anchorite." Then he sent word to the patriarch Nanda: "Send me the young hero, Krishna; I would make him driver of my chariot and my first counsellor."[1] Nanda informed Krishna of the king's order, and Krishna replied: "I will go." Within his own breast he

[1] In ancient India these two functions were often united into one. The kings' chariot-drivers were often mighty personages and ministers of the monarchs. Instances of this double function abound in Hindu poetry.

thought: "Can the King of Mathura be He who never changes? Through Him I shall discover where my mother is."

Kansa, seeing Krishna's strength, his skill and intelligence, was greatly pleased with him, and entrusted the guardianship of his kingdom into the young man's keeping. Nysoumba, when she saw the hero of Mount Merou, felt an impure desire assail her flesh; her cunning mind and criminal thoughts wove together a sombre plot. Unknown to the king, she had his chariot-driver summoned into her gymnoeceum. She possessed the magic art of momentarily regaining her youth by the aid of powerful philters. Devaki's son found Nysoumba, her ebony bosom almost wholly undraped, stretched on a purple couch. Her arms and wrists were encircled with gold rings, whilst a diadem of precious stones glittered on her head. At her feet burned a copper perfuming-pan, from which a thin stream of incense mounted to the roof.

"Krishna," said the daughter of the king of the serpents, "thy brow is more placid and calm than the snow of the Himavat; thy heart is like the lightning flash. In thine innocence thou shinest above the kings of the earth. Here no one has recognised thee; thou knowest not even

thyself. I alone know who thou art: the Devas have made of thee the master of men; I alone can make of thee the ruler of the world. Wilt thou be that ruler?"

"If Mahâdeva is speaking with thy voice," said Krishna gravely, "thou wilt tell me where my mother is, and where I may find the old man who spoke to me beneath the cedars of Mount Merou."

"Thy mother?" said Nysoumba, a smile of disdain on her proud lips. "Indeed it is not I who will tell thee where she is, whilst as for the old man of whom thou speakest, I know him not. Insensate! Thou followest after dreams, and seest not the treasures of the earth I now offer thee. There are kings who wear a royal crown, and yet are not kings. There are shepherds' sons who bear the ensign of royalty on their brow, and yet are ignorant of their power. Thou art strong, young, and beautiful to behold: all hearts are thine. Kill the king in his sleep and I will place the crown on thine head; then shalt thou be ruler of the world. For I love thee; thou art predestined to be mine. I will, I command that it be so!"

As she spoke the queen rose from her recumbent posture, imperious and fascinating, terrible

as a beautiful serpent. . . . Rising on her couch, her dark eyes shot forth so sombre a flame into Krishna's limpid orbs that he shuddered in dismay. The depths of hell were laid bare before him in that look. He saw the abyss of the temple of Kali, the Goddess of Desire and Death. Serpents were writhing about as though in everlasting torture. Then of a sudden Krishna's eyes seemed like twin swords, they pierced the queen through and through, and the hero of Mount Merou exclaimed :

"I am faithful to the king who has taken me as his defender ; but thou, know that thou shalt die !"

Nysoumba uttered a piercing shriek, and rolled over and over on her couch, biting the purple hangings in her fury. All her false youth had vanished, once more she had become old and wrinkled. Krishna, leaving her alone with her wrath, made his way out of the palace.

Persecuted night and day by the anchorite's words, the King of Mathura said to his chariot-driver :

"Ever since the enemy has set foot in my palace I no longer sleep peacefully on my throne. An infernal magician, named Vasishta, who lives in the depths of a mighty forest, has cast on me his curse. Now I cannot live in peace, the old man has poisoned my days. But with you, who fear nothing, by my side, I dread him not. Come with me into

the accursed forest. A spy, well acquainted with all its by-paths, will guide us to him. As soon as you see him, run up and strike, before he can utter a word or cast on you a single glance. When he is mortally wounded, ask him where may be found the son of my sister Devaki, and what is his name. The peace of my kingdom depends on the solving of this mystery."

"Courage!" replied Krishna. "I was afraid neither of Kalayavana, nor of the serpent of Kali. Who could cause me to tremble now? However powerful this man be, I will find out what he is concealing from you."

Disguised as hunters, the king and his guide rolled away in a rapid chariot, drawn by fiery horses. The spy, who had explored the forest, was in the rear of the chariot. It was the commencement of the rainy season. The rivers were swollen, and the roads covered with plant vegetation, whilst a white line of storks appeared riding on the clouds. As they drew near the sacred forest, the horizon became overcast, a light veil overspread the sun, and the air was filled with a copper-tinted misty vapour. From the storm-laden heavens hung dark clouds, like hunting-horns, over the quivering foliage of the tree-tops.

"Wherefore has the sky so suddenly darkened?" asked Krishna. "Why has the forest become so black?"

"I know the reason," said the King of Mathura. "It is Vasishta, the wicked hermit, who darkens the sky, and arms the cursed forest against me. Art thou afraid, Krishna?"

"Though the sky were to change its visage, and the earth its colour, I should still be undismayed!"

"Forward, then!"

Krishna whipped up the horses, and the chariot entered beneath the dense shade of the baobabs. For some time it rolled along with marvellous rapidity, but still the forest became more wild and terrible in aspect. Lightning flashed forth, peals of thunder were heard.

"Never have I seen the sky so black," said Krishna, "nor the branches of the trees become entwined in this way. This is indeed a powerful magician."

"Krishna, slayer of serpents, hero of Mount Merou, art thou afraid?"

"Though the earth quake to its foundations, and the vault of heaven fall in, I should still fear not!"

"Then continue thy way!"

Once more the bold driver whipped the steeds, and the chariot resumed its course. Then the tempest became so frightful that the giant trees

rocked to and fro. The shattered forest moaned as though with the howling and shrieking of a thousand demons. A thunderbolt fell close by the travellers, and a shattered baobab barred the path. Then the horses suddenly stopped, and the earth quaked.

"Thy enemy must be a god," said Krishna, "for Indra himself protects him."

"We are nearing the end," said the king's spy. "You see that verdant passage; right at the end is a wretched hut, and it is there that Vasishta, the great mouni, dwells, feeding the birds. He is an object of terror to the wild beasts, and is himself protected by a gazelle. But I would not advance another step, no, not for a kingdom."

On hearing these words, the King of Mathura had turned livid. "He is there! Behind those trees!" And, clutching hold of Krishna, trembling the while in every limb, he whispered:

"Vasishta! Vasishta! who is plotting my death, is there. From the depths of his lair he sees me. . . . His eye is fixed on me. Oh, deliver me from his power!"

"That I will, by Mahâdeva!" said Krishna, dismounting from the chariot, and leaping on the trunk of the baobab. "I must see him who makes you tremble so."

The centenarian mouni, Vasishta, had dwelt for a year in this hut, concealed in the deepest part of the holy forest, awaiting his end. Before the death of the body, he was freed from its prison. Though his eyes were sightless, he saw by the vision of the soul. His skin was scarcely conscious of heat or cold, but his spirit lived in peaceful unity with the sovereign spirit. He now only saw the things of this world through the light of Brahma, and was unceasingly engaged in prayer and meditation. A faithful disciple left the hermitage every day to bring him the scanty grain of rice on which he lived. The gazelle, which browsed from his hand, warned him of the approach of wild beasts by braying. Then he drove them away by murmuring a mantra, and extending his seven-knotted bamboo staff. His inner vision enabled him to see the approach of men, whoever they might be, from a distance of several leagues.

Krishna, proceeding along the dark path, suddenly found himself before Vasishta. The king of the anchorites was seated with legs crossed on a mat, in a state of profound peace, leaning against the post of his hut. From his sightless eyes there shone the inner illumination of the seer. No sooner had Krishna perceived him than he recognised "the sublime old man." He felt a wave of joy

pass over him, and a feeling of respect utterly subdued his soul. Forgetting the king, his chariot, and his kingdom, he knelt down before the saint . . . and worshipped him.

Vasishta seemed to see him; his body quitted its recumbent posture, and, stretching forth both arms to bless his guest, his lips murmured the sacred syllable—AUM.[1]

King Kansa, hearing no sound, and finding that his charioteer did not return, followed him with furtive steps along the path, and stood petrified with amazement at seeing Krishna on his knees before the holy anchorite. The latter fixed on Kansa his sightless eyes, and, raising his staff, said:

"Hail! King of Mathura! Thou art come to slay me! Welcome! For thou shalt free me from the burden of this body. Thou wishest to know where is the son of thy sister Devaki who is to dethrone thee. This is he, kneeling before me, and before Mahâdeva—Krishna, thine own charioteer! Think how insensate and accursed thou art, for this is thy most redoubtable enemy. Thou hast brought him here for me to tell him that

[1] In the Brahmanic initiation this signifies the Supreme God, the God-Spirit. Each letter corresponds to one of the divine faculties, or, speaking in popular language, to one of the persons of the Trinity.

he is the predestined child. Tremble! Thou art lost, for thy infernal soul will now be the prey of demons."

Kansa listened in utter stupefaction. Not daring to look the old man face to face, and pale with rage at seeing Krishna still on his knees, he took his bow, and, stretching it with all the strength of his arms, let fly an arrow against Devaki's son. His arm, however, trembled, the shaft swerved from its course, and the arrow plunged into the breast of Vasishta, who, with arms extended in the form of a cross, seemed to await it with ecstatic bliss.

And now a terrible cry rang forth, not from the old man's breast, but from Krishna's. He had heard the arrow hiss past his ear, had seen it in the flesh of the saint . . . and it seemed as though the shaft had pierced his own heart, so closely united at that moment was his own soul with that of the Rishi. With that keen arrow the grief of the whole world entered Krishna's soul, torturing it to its very depths.

Vasishta, however, the arrow still in his breast, and with posture unchanged, once more opened his lips. He murmured:

"Son of Mahâdeva, wherefore didst thou utter this cry? To slay is vain and ineffectual. The

arrow cannot reach the soul; the victim vanquishes the assassin. Triumph, Krishna! thy destiny is being accomplished. I now return to Him who never changes. Brahmâ, receive my soul. But thou, his elect, saviour of the world — Up! Krishna! Krishna!"

Krishna rose to his feet, sword in hand, intending to turn on the king, but the latter had fled.

Then a radiant flash rent asunder the black heavens, and Krishna fell to the ground, struck down by a dazzling light. Whilst his body remained insensible, his soul, united to that of the old man by the attraction of sympathy, mounted into space. Earth, with its rivers, seas, and continents, disappeared like a black ball, and both rose to the seventh heaven of the Devas, towards the Father of beings, the sun of suns, Mahâdeva, the divine intelligence. They plunged into an ocean of light opening out before them. In the centre of the sphere Krishna saw Devaki, his radiant, glorified mother, who, with an ineffable smile, stretched out her arms and drew him to her bosom. Thousands of Devas came to steep themselves in the radiance of the Virgin-Mother as in an incandescent flame. Krishna felt himself absorbed once again in Devaki's look of love. Then, from the heart of the radiant mother, his being shone out through the entire

heavens. He felt that he was the Son, the divine soul of all beings, the Word of life, the creative Logos. Raised above universal life, he yet penetrated it by the essence of pain, the fire of prayer, and the felicity of a divine sacrifice.[1]

[1] The legend of Krishna enables us to grasp from its very source the idea of the Virgin-Mother, the Mary-God, and the Trinity. . . . In India this idea appears from the origin, in its transparent symbolism, with its profound metaphysical signification. In Book v., Chapter ii., the *Vishnou-Pourana*, after relating the conception of Krishna by Devaki, adds: "No one could look at Devaki by reason of the light in which she was enveloped; those who beheld her splendour felt their minds troubled; the gods, invisible to mortal eyes, were continually singing her praises, since Vishnou was embodied in her person. They said: Thou art that infinite and subtle Prakriti, who formerly bore Brahma in her womb; thou wast afterwards the goddess of the Word, the energy of the Creator of the universe, and the mother of the Vedas. O thou eternal being, comprising in thy substance the essence of all created things, thou art one with creation; thou wast the sacrifice whence proceeds all that the earth produces; thou art the word, which by friction engenders fire. Like Aditi, thou art the mother of the gods; like Diti, thou art the mother of the Daityas, their enemies. Thou art the light whence springs the day; thou art humility, mother of true wisdom. Thou art the politics of kings, mother of order; thou art desire from which love is born; thou art satisfaction, the source of resignation; thou art intelligence, the mother of science; thou art patience, mother of courage; the firmament and stars are thy children; from thee proceeds all that exists. . . . Thou hast descended to earth for the salvation of the world. Have pity on us, O goddess! Show thyself favourable to the universe; be proud to bear the god who upholds the world."

This passage proves that the Brahmans identified the mother of Krishna with the universal substance and the feminine principle of nature. They made of her the second person of the divine trinity, of the initial non-manifested triad. The Father, Nara (Eternal Masculine); the Mother, Nari (Eternal Feminine); and the Son, Virâj (Creative Word), such are the divine faculties. In other terms—the

When Krishna came to himself, the thunder was still pealing through the sky, the forest plunged in darkness, and torrents of rain fell upon the hut. A gazelle was licking the blood on the body of the pierced ascetic. "The sublime old man" was now no more than a corpse. Krishna, however, rose as from the dead. A mighty abyss separated him from the world and its vain appearances. He had lived the great truth, and understood his mission.

King Kansa, terror-stricken, was fleeing in his storm-driven chariot, his horses prancing and rearing as though lashed by a thousand demons.

intellectual principle, the plastic principle, and the productive principle. All three together constitute the *natura naturans*, to use Spinoza's expression. The organised world, the living universe, *natura naturata*, is the product of the creative word, which in turn is manifested under three forms: Brahma, the Spirit, corresponding to the divine world; Vishnou, the Soul, to the human world; and Siva, the body, to the natural world. In these three worlds, the male and the female principles are equally active, and the Eternal Feminine is manifested at once in terrestrial, human, and divine nature. Isis is triple, as also is Cybele. As one may see, when thus conceived, the double trinity, that of God and of the universe, contains the principles and the framework of a theodicy and a cosmogony. It is just to recognise that this primitive idea springs from India. All the ancient temples, all great religions, and several great philosophies, have adopted it. From apostolic times, and in the early centuries of Christianity, the Christian initiates revered the feminine principle of visible and invisible nature under the name of the Holy Ghost, represented by a dove, the sign of feminine power in all the temples of Asia and Europe. Even though the Church has since hidden or lost the key of its mysteries, their signification is still written in its symbols.

CHAPTER VI

THE DOCTRINE OF THE INITIATES

KRISHNA was greeted by the anchorites as the expected and predestined successor of Vasishta. The Shrâddha, or funeral ceremony of the holy ascetic, was performed in the sacred forest, and Devaki's son received the seven-knotted staff, the symbol of command, after accomplishing the sacrifice of fire in the presence of the oldest anchorites, those who know the three Vedas by heart. Then Krishna withdrew to Mount Merou, there to meditate on his doctrine and the way of salvation for men. His meditations and austere practices lasted seven years. At the end of this time he felt that he had tamed his earthly by his heavenly nature, and that he had sufficiently identified himself with the sun of Mahâdeva to merit the name of Son of God. Then, only, he summoned the anchorites, both young and old, into his presence, to reveal to them his doctrine. They found Krishna the hero transformed into a saint; purer and nobler in soul. Without losing the strength of the lion, he had

gained the gentleness of the dove. Amongst the first to greet him was Arjuna, a descendant of the solar kings, one of the Pandavas, dethroned by the Kouravas or lunar kings. The young Arjuna was full of fire, but too ready to fall into discouragement and doubt. He became passionately attached to Krishna.

Seated beneath the cedars of Mount Merou, in front of the Himavat, Krishna began to speak to his disciples of the truths inaccessible to such as live under the slavery of the senses. He taught them the doctrine of the immortal soul, its rebirths and mystical union with God. . . . The body, he said, envelope of the soul, which makes therein its dwelling, is a finished thing, but the indwelling soul is invisible, imponderable, incorruptible, eternal.[1] The earthly man is threefold, like the divinity of which he is the reflection: intelligence, soul, and body. If the soul is united with the intelligence it attains to *Sattva*, wisdom and peace; if it remains uncertain between the intelligence and the body, it is dominated by *Rajas*, passion, and turns from object to object in a fatal circle; if it abandons itself to the body it falls into *Tamas*,

[1] The assertion of this doctrine, which later became that of Plato, is found in the first book of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, in the form of a dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna.

want of reason, ignorance, and temporary death. This every man may observe in and around himself.[1]

"But what is the fate of the soul?" asked Arjuna, "after death? Does it always obey the same law, or can it escape from the law?"

"It never escapes, but obeys it always," replied Krishna. "This is the mystery of rebirths. As the depths of heaven are laid bare before the starry rays, so the depths of life light up beneath the glory of this truth. When the body is dissolved, when *Sattva* is in the ascendant, the soul flies away into the region of those pure beings who have knowledge of the Sublime. When the body experiences this dissolution whilst *Rajas* dominates, the soul once more comes to live amongst those who have bound themselves to things of earth. Again, if the body is destroyed when *Tamas* dominates, the soul, whose radiance is dimmed by matter, is again attracted by the wombs of irrational beings."[2]

"That is just," said Arjuna. "Now tell us what happens, as the centuries roll on, to those who have followed the path of wisdom, and who dwell in divine worlds after death?"

[1] Books xiii. to xviii., *Bhagavad-Gita*.
[2] *Bhagavad-Gita*, chapter xiv.

"The devout man, surprised by death," replied Krishna, "after enjoying for several centuries the due rewards of his virtues in superior realms of bliss, finally returns again to inhabit a body in some holy and respectable family. But this kind of regeneration in this life is very difficult to attain. The man thus born again finds himself possessed of the same degree of application and advancement, as regards the intellect, as he had in his first body, and he begins to work afresh to attain perfection in devotion."

"So even the good," said Arjuna, "are forced to be born again and recommence the life of the body! But tell us, O Lord of Life, if there is no end to the eternal rebirths for the one who pursues wisdom?"

"Listen," said Krishna, "hear a mighty and profound secret, the sublime and sovereign mystery. To attain to perfection one must acquire *the knowledge of unity*, which is above wisdom; one must rise to the divine Being who is above the soul, above the intelligence. This divine Being, this sublime Friend is in each one of us. God dwells within each man, though few can find Him. This is the path of salvation. Once thou hast perceived the perfect Being, who is above the world and within thyself, do thou decide to abandon the

enemy, which takes the form of desire. Control thy passions. The joys afforded by the senses are like wombs of future sufferings. Not only do good, but be good. Let the motive be in the action, not in its fruits. Abandon the fruit of thy works, but let each action be as an offering to the supreme Being. The man who sacrifices his desires and works to the Being whence proceed the beginnings of all things, and by whom the universe has been formed, attains to perfection by this sacrifice. One in spirit, he acquires that spiritual wisdom which is above the worship of offerings, and experiences a felicity divine. For he who within himself finds his happiness, his joy, and light, is one with God. Know then that the soul which has found God is freed from rebirth and death, old age and grief. Such a soul drinks the waters of immortality."[1]

Thus Krishna explained his doctrine to his disciples; by inner contemplation he gradually raised them to the sublime truths which had been opened out to himself in the lightning-flash of his vision. When he spake of Mahâdeva his voice became more serious in tone, and his countenance lit up. One day Arjuna, overcome by curiosity, asked boldly:

[1] *Bhagavad-Gita.*

"Show us Mahâdeva in his divine form. Can our eyes behold him?"

Then Krishna rose and began to speak of the Being who breathes in all beings, of a hundred thousand shapes, countless eyes, and faces turning in every direction, who yet surpasses them all by the very height of infinity; who in his motionless and limitless body encloses the moving universe with all its divisions. "If there were to burst forth simultaneously in the heavens the glory of a thousand suns," said Krishna, "it would bear but a faint resemblance to the splendour of the one All-Mighty." As he thus spoke of Mahâdeva, so glorious a ray of light beamed forth from Krishna's eyes that the disciples could not bear its brilliancy, but threw themselves down at his feet. Arjuna's hair stood on end, and with bowed head and clasped hands he said: "Master, thy words terrify us, we cannot endure the sight of the great Being thou hast summoned up before us. It utterly confounds us."[1]

Krishna replied: "Listen to what he tells you by my mouth: You and I have had several births. Mine are known only to myself, you do not know

[1] See this transfiguration of Krishna in Book xi. of the *Bhagavad-Gîta*. It may be compared with the transfiguration of Jesus in the 17th chapter of St. Matthew. See also Book viii. of the *Bhagavad-Gîta*.

yours. Although I am not by nature subject to birth or death, and am master of all creatures, yet, since I control my nature, I render myself visible by my own power, and every time virtue declines throughout the world, and vice and injustice gain the upper hand, then I make myself visible, and thus appear from age to age for the salvation of the just, the destruction of the wicked, and the re-establishment of virtue. He who knows, in truth, my nature and my divine work, leaving his body, does not return to a new birth : he comes to me."[1]

As he thus spake, Krishna cast a look of benevolence and love on his disciples. Arjuna exclaimed :

"Lord, thou art our master, thou art the son of Mahâdeva ! I see it by thy goodness and ineffable charm even more than by the awful majesty of thy glory. It is not on the giddy heights of infinity that the Devas seek and desire thee ; it is under human form that they love and adore thee. Neither penitence nor alms-giving, Vedas nor sacrifice, avail to obtain a single look from thee. Thou art truth. Lead us to the strife, to combat and death. Whithersoever thou wishest, we will follow thee !"

[1] *Bhagavad-Gita*, Book iv.

With countenances beaming in enraptured delight, the disciples crowded round Krishna, saying:

"Why did we not see thee sooner? It is Mahâdeva speaking in thee."

He replied:

"Your eyes were not opened; I have given you the great secret. Say it only to such as are capable of understanding it. You are my elect; you see the goal, the crowd sees only a portion of the path. Now let us go and preach the way of salvation to the people.

CHAPTER VII

TRIUMPH AND DEATH

AFTER instructing his disciples on Mount Merou, Krishna betook himself with them to the banks of the Jamuna and the Ganges, to convert the people. He entered into huts, and tarried awhile in the various towns. When evening came, the multitudes grouped around him on the outskirts of the villages. What he preached more particularly to the people was love to one's neighbour. "The evils we inflict on our neighbour," he said, "follow us, as the shadow follows the body. Such works as have their root in love for one's fellowmen should be the object of the righteous man's ambition, for they will weigh heaviest in the heavenly balance. If thou keepest company with the good, thy example will be fruitless; fear not to live among the wicked, to bring them to the light. The virtuous man is like the gigantic banyan-tree, whose beneficent shade affords the fragrance of life to the surrounding plants." At times, Krishna, whose soul was now overflowing with the perfume of love,

spoke in gentle and seductive images of abnegation and sacrifice. "Just as the earth tolerates those who trample her under foot, and tear open her bosom by the plough, so ought we to render good for evil. . . . The honest man must fall beneath the strokes of the wicked, just as the sandal-tree, which gives its perfume to the axe that strikes it, to the ground."

When the demi-savants, the incredulous, and the proud, asked him to explain to them the nature of God, he replied by such sentences as these : "Man's knowledge is only vanity; all his good actions are illusory when he does not lay them down before the feet of God. He who is humble in heart and mind is loved of God, he needs nothing besides. Infinity and space alone can comprehend the infinite. God alone can comprehend God."

These were the only new doctrines he taught. He delighted and filled with enthusiasm the multitudes especially, for he spoke of the living God, of Vishnou. He taught that the master of the universe had already once more become incarnate amongst men. He had appeared successively in the seven Rishis, in Vyasa, and in Vasishta. He would appear again. But Vishnou, so Krishna said, was pleased at times to speak through the mouths of the lowly, a beggar, a repentant woman,

a little child. He related the parable of the poor fisherman, Dourga, who had met a small child dying of hunger at the foot of a tamarind tree. . . . The kind-hearted Dourga, though extremely poor, and burdened with a numerous family, which he knew not how to bring up, was filled with pity for the starving child, and took him home. The sun had set, and the moon was rising over the Ganges; the family had repeated their evening prayer, and the small child murmured gently: "As the fruit of the cataca purifies the water, so do good deeds purify the soul. Take thy nets, Dourga, thy bark is floating on the Ganges." Dourga cast his nets, which bent beneath the number of fish they contained. The child had disappeared. "Thus," said Krishna, "when man forgets his own misery to think of others' sufferings, Vishnou manifests himself and makes him happy in heart." By such examples Krishna preached the worship of Vishnou. Whilst Devaki's son was speaking, every one was amazed to find God so near his own heart.

The fame of the prophet of Mount Merou spread throughout India. The shepherds who had known him in childhood and had witnessed his early deeds of prowess, could not believe that this holy personage was the impetuous hero of former days. Old Nanda was dead, but his two daughters,

Sarasvati and Nichdali, beloved of Krishna, were still living. Diverse had been their destinies. Sarasvati, exasperated at Krishna's departure, had sought forgetfulness in marriage. She had become the wife of a man of noble caste, who had espoused her for her beauty. Afterwards he had put her away, and sold her to a merchant. In disgust, Sarasvati had left this man to become a woman of evil fame. One day, feeling depressed and down-hearted, overcome by remorse, she returned home to her native village, and secretly called on her sister Nichdali. The latter, ever thinking of Krishna as though he were present, had remained unmarried, and was living as servant to her brother. When Sarasvati had told her sister all the misfortune and shame that had befallen her, Nichdali replied:

"My poor sister, I pardon thee, but my brother will never do so. Krishna alone can save thee."

A light shone in Sarasvati's dull, lack-lustre eyes.

"Krishna!" she said, "what has become of him?"

"He is now a saint, a mighty prophet. He preaches on the banks of the Ganges."

"Let us go and find him!" said Sarasvati.

Whereupon the two sisters set out, the one blighted with passion, the other in the sweet per-

fume of innocence, and yet both consoled by the same love.

Krishna was engaged in preaching his doctrine to the warriors or kshatryas. He discoursed to the Brahmans, the men of the military caste, and the common people in turn. To the Brahmans he explained, with all the calmness of ripened age, the profound truths of divine science; in presence of the rajahs he celebrated warlike and family virtues with the ardent fire of youth; whilst to the common people he spake of charity, resignation, and hope, with all the simplicity of childhood.

Krishna was present at a feast given by a renowned chief, when two women asked to be brought to the prophet. Permission to enter was given them, by reason of their penitents' robes. Sarasvati and Nichdali threw themselves at Krishna's feet. The former, with tears running down her cheeks, said:

"Ever since thou hast left us, my life has been passed in error and sin; but, if thou wilt, Krishna, thou canst save me! . . ."

Nichdali added:

"O Krishna! long, long ago, when I saw thee, I knew I loved thee for ever; now that I find thee again in thy glory, I know thou art the son of Mahâdeva!"

Then they both kissed his feet. The rajahs said :

"Why, holy Rishi, dost thou permit these women of the people to insult thee with insensate words ?"

Krishna replied :

"Let them open their hearts to me ; in truth they are better than you are. The one possesses faith, and the other love. Sarasvati, the erring sinner, is saved from henceforth because she believes in me, and Nichdali, in her silence, has shown herself a greater lover of truth than you with all your loud professions. Know that my radiant mother, who abides in the sun of Mahâdeva, will teach her the mysteries of eternal love when you are all still plunged in the darkness of lower lives."

From that day Sarasvati and Nichdali followed Krishna's footsteps, along with the rest of his disciples. Inspired by him, they taught the other women.

Kansa still reigned at Mathura. Since the murder of Vasishta, the king on his throne had found no peace. The anchorite's prophecy had been realised—Devaki's son was living ! The king had seen him, and before his look he had felt his might and royalty dwindle away into insignificance. He trembled for his life, like a dry leaf; and often would he turn round in sudden fear,

notwithstanding that his guards were ever by his side, expecting to see the youthful hero in awful glory standing in the doorway. . . . Nysoumba, on the other hand, rolling about on her couch in the gynaeceum, reflected gloomily over her lost powers. When she heard that Krishna, now a prophet, was preaching on the banks of the Ganges, she persuaded the king to send against him a troop of soldiers to bring him bound before her. When Krishna saw them, he smiled and said :

"I know who you are, and why you have come here. I am ready to follow you to your king; but, first of all, let me speak to you of the king of heaven, my own king."

Then he began to speak of Mahâdeva, and his glorious manifestations. When he had finished, the soldiers gave up their weapons to Krishna, saying :

"We will not take thee prisoner to our king, but we will follow thee to thine own king."

They remained by his side, at which news, when he heard it, Kansa was greatly troubled. Nysoumba said to him :

"Send the first men in the kingdom."

This was done, and they proceeded to the town where Krishna was teaching. They had promised not to listen to him, but when they saw the glory

of his look, his majestic mien, and the respect shown him by the multitudes, they could not help paying attention to the words he uttered. Krishna spoke to them of the inner slavery of such as do evil, and of the heavenly liberty enjoyed by such as do good. The kshatryas were filled with surprise and gladness, for they seemed to feel that an enormous weight had been lifted from their minds.

"Truly thou art a mighty magician," they said, "for we had sworn to take thee before the king, loaded with iron chains. Now, however, it is impossible for us to do this, as thou hast delivered us from our own bonds."

Returning to Kansa, they said to him:

"We cannot bring this man to thee. He is a mighty prophet, and thou hast nothing to fear from him."

The king, seeing that everything was useless, had his guards tripled, and iron chains placed on all the gates of his palace. One day, however, he heard a mighty sound in the town, cries of joy and triumph. The guards came to him and said: "It is Krishna entering Mathura. The people are bursting open the gates and breaking the iron chains." Kansa wished to escape, but his very guards forced him to remain on his throne.

It was indeed Krishna who, followed by his

disciples and a numerous company of anchorites, was making a triumphal entry into Mathura. The city was decked with flags, and filled with a mighty multitude resembling a storm-tossed sea. He proceeded amidst a shower of garlands and flowers: universal was the acclamation he received. In front of the temples stood groups of Brahmans beneath the sacred banyan-trees, to greet Devaki's son, the slayer of the serpent, the hero of Mount Merou, but especially the prophet of Vishnou. Followed by a brilliant procession, and saluted as a liberator by both people and kshatryas, Krishna appeared before king and queen.

"Thou hast reigned only by violence and evil," said Krishna to Kansa, "and thou hast deserved a thousand deaths for having killed the old saint Vasishta. But thou shalt not die yet; I wish to prove to the world that it is not by slaying but by pardoning one's conquered foes that one really triumphs over them."

"Wicked magician!" said Kansa, "thou hast robbed me of my crown and my kingdom. Take the rest."

"Thou speakest like a madman," said Krishna. "Wert thou to perish in thy present condition of folly and hardened crime, thou wouldst be irrevocably lost in the other life. On the contrary,

if thou wilt begin to comprehend thy foolishness and to repent now, thy punishment shall be less in the next life, and, through the mediation of pure spirits, Mahâdeva will one day save thee."

Nysoumba, leaning over, whispered into the king's ear :

"Insensate ! Profit by this foolish pride of his. While life lasts the hope of vengeance remains."

Krishna, though he had not heard, understood what she had said. With stern, though pitiful glance, he said :

"Wicked woman, ever instilling thy poison into thy companion's soul ! Black magician, corruptress as thou art, thy mind has now no room for anything but serpent's venom. Extirpate this poison, for if thou dost not, I shall some day be compelled to bruise thy head. Now, thou shalt accompany the king to a place of penitence, there to expiate thy crimes, beneath the watchful guard of the Brahmans."

After these events, Krishna, with the consent of the people and the first men in the kingdom, consecrated Arjuna, his disciple, the most illustrious descendant of the solar race, as King of Mathura. He gave supreme authority to the Brahmans, who became teachers of the kings. He himself remained chief of the anchorites, who formed the

upper council of the Brahmans. To prevent this council being persecuted, he caused a strong town to be built in the midst of the mountains, defended by a lofty enclosure and a chosen population. It was called Dwarka. In the centre of the town was the temple of the initiates, the most important part of which was concealed underground.[1]

When the kings of the lunar cult heard that a king of the solar cult had once more mounted the throne of Mathura, and that the Brahmans, through him, would become masters of India, they formed a powerful league to overthrow him. Arjuna, on his side, grouped around him all the kings of the solar cult, of the white Aryan Vedic tradition. From the depths of the temple of Dwarka, Krishna followed and directed them. The two armies were

[1] The *Vishnou-Pourana*, Book v., chapters xxii. and xxx., mentions this town: "Krishna accordingly determined to build a citadel in which the tribe of Yadou should find a sure refuge, and of such a nature that the women themselves could defend it. The town of Dwarka was protected by raised bulwarks, embellished by gardens and reservoirs, and beautiful as Amaravati, the city of Indra." In this town he planted the tree Parajata, "whose fragrant perfume embalms the land all around. All such as approached it, found themselves capable of remembering their former existence." This tree is evidently the symbol of divine science and initiation; the same is found in the Chaldean tradition, passing thence into the Hebrew genesis. After the death of Krishna, the town is submerged, the tree ascends to heaven, but the temple remains. If all this has any historical signification, it means to one acquainted with the ultra-symbolic and prudent language of the Hindus, that some tyrant or other had the city razed to the ground, and that initiation became more and more secret.

face to face, and the decisive battle imminent. Arjuna, no longer having his master by his side, felt his mind troubled and courage failing. One morning, at daybreak, Krishna appeared before the tent of the king, his disciple.

"Wherefore hast thou not begun the fight which is to decide whether the sons of the moon, or those of the sun, shall rule over the earth?" asked the master sternly.

"Without thee I cannot begin," said Arjuna. "Look at these two immense armies, and these multitudes, on the point of slaying one another."

From the eminence on which they were standing, the Lord of Spirits and the King of Mathura looked down on the two mighty hosts, arrayed in perfect order in front of one another. The golden coats of mail of the chiefs shone brilliantly; whilst thousands of foot-soldiers and of horses and elephants awaited the signal of battle. At this moment the chief of the opposing host, the oldest of the Kouravas, blew a blast from his marine shell, whose sound resembled the roaring of a lion. Then suddenly might be heard throughout the vast battlefield the neighings of horses, a confused sound of arms, drums, and trumpets . . . a mighty uproar. Arjuna had only to mount his chariot, drawn by a pair of white horses, and send forth a

blast from his sky-blue shell as a signal of battle to the sons of the sun. But the king was overcome with pity, and said in great dejection :

"When I see this multitude of men come to blows, I feel my limbs fail me, my tongue cleaves to the roof of my mouth, my body trembles, my hair stands on end, and my mind is in a whirl of indecision. I see evil omens ; no good can come from this massacre. What can we do with kingdoms and pleasures, or even with life itself ? The very men for whom we desire kingdoms and pleasures and joys are standing here, ready to fight, forgetting life and property. Teachers, fathers, sons, grandfathers, uncles and grandchildren, are on the point of slaying one another. I have no wish to slay them so as to rule over the three worlds, much less then to rule over this land. What pleasure should I find in killing my enemies ? Once the rebels are dead, the sin would recoil on ourselves."

"How this scourge of fear, so unworthy of a sage, a source of heaven-expelling shame, has taken possession of thee !" said Krishna. "Be no longer weak and woman-like. Up !"

But Arjuna, dismayed and heartless, sat down and said :

"I will not engage in combat."

Then Krishna, king of spirits, gently smiling, continued:

"O Arjuna! I have called thee king over sleep, that thy spirit be ever awake. But thy spirit has sunk into slumber, thy body has overcome thy soul. Thou bewailest those who ought not to be wept over, and thy words are void of understanding. The wise among men mourn over neither the living nor the dead. Both thyself, and myself, and these commanders of men, have always existed, nor shall they ever cease to live. As in this body the soul experiences childhood, youth, and old age, so shall it have similar experiences in other bodies. A man of discretion does not trouble himself on that account. Son of Bhârat! endure pain and pleasure with equanimity. Such as this fate does not touch are deserving of immortality. Those who see the real essence of things see the eternal truth which dominates soul and body. Be it known unto thee that what passes through all things cannot be destroyed. None can destroy the Inexhaustible; thou knowest well that these bodies shall not endure. But the seers also know that the incarnate soul is eternal, indestructible, and infinite. This is the reason thou must go to the fight, descendant of Bhârat! Those who believe that the soul can either slay or be slain are alike mistaken. It neither kills nor dies. It is

not born, nor does it depart this life; neither can it lose that being it has always had. Just as one throws away old gowns to put on new ones, so the incarnate soul throws aside its body to take on others. Sword cannot cut it nor fire burn, water cannot moisten nor air dry its essence. It is impermeable and incombustible. Eternally firm and lasting, it interpenetrates everything. Accordingly, thou oughtest not to trouble thyself regarding either birth or death, Arjuna! Death is certain for him who is born, and birth is certain for him who dies. Look to thy duty without faltering. For a kshatrya there is nothing better than a righteous combat. Happy the warriors who find battle to be a gate opening into heaven! But if thou wilt not fight this just fight, thou wilt fall into sin, forsaking both thy duty and thy fame. All beings will speak of thy eternal baseness, for infamy is worse than death to the man who has experienced honour."[1]

On hearing these words of the master, Arjuna was overcome with shame, and felt his royal blood course bravely through his veins. Springing forward into his chariot, he gave the signal for the fight. Then Krishna bade his disciple farewell, and left the field of battle, certain beforehand of the victory the sons of the sun would win.

[1] The beginning of the *Bhagavad-Gita*.

All the same, Krishna saw that, in order to have his religion accepted by the conquered, a final victory, more difficult than that of arms, must be gained over their souls. Just as the saint Vasishta had died pierced by an arrow to reveal the supreme truth to Krishna, so Krishna was to die of his own free-will beneath the stroke of his mortal enemy, in order to plant the faith he had preached to his disciples and to the world even in the hearts of his enemies. He knew that the former King of Mathura, far from showing a spirit of penitence, had taken refuge with his father-in-law Kalayavana, king of the serpents. His hatred, ever whetted by Nysoumba, caused Krishna to be followed by spies, who sought a favourable opportunity for striking him. Krishna now felt that his mission was over, and needed, for its perfect accomplishment, only the final seal of sacrifice. Accordingly, he ceased avoiding and paralysing his enemy by the might of his will. He knew that if he no longer defended himself by this occult power, the long-meditated blow would strike him in secret. But the son of Devaki wished to die far from the haunts of men, away in the solitude of the Himavat. There he would feel himself nearer his radiant mother, the sublime old man, and the sun of Mahâdeva.

So Krishna set out for a hermitage in a lonely,

desolate spot, at the foot of the lofty peaks of the Himavat. None of his disciples had guessed his purpose. Sarasvati and Nichdali alone read it in the master's eyes by the divining instinct of woman's love. When Sarasvati understood that it was his will to die, flinging herself at his feet, she kissed them passionately, and exclaimed :

"Master, do not forsake us!"

Nichdali looked up at him, and said simply :

"I know where thou goest; if we have loved thee, give us leave to follow thee!"

Krishna replied :

"In my heaven, love shall be refused nothing. Come!"

After a long journey, the prophet and the holy women reached a few huts grouped around a large cedar, stripped of its bark, on a rocky, yellowish mountain. On one side could be seen the immense snow-white domes of the Himavat, on the other a labyrinth of mountains, whilst away in the distance stretched the plain of India, lost like a dream in a golden mist. In this hermitage lived a few penitents, clothed in coverings of bark, with hair and beard long and untrimmed, their bodies all defiled with mud and dust, whilst their limbs had shrunk beneath the heat of the sun and the wind of heaven. Certain of them resembled a tightly-

drawn skin covering a dry skeleton. On seeing this desolate spot, Sarasvati exclaimed :

"The earth is far behind, and heaven is dumb. O Lord ! wherefore hast thou brought us to this wilderness forsaken by god and man ? "

"Pray !" replied Krishna, "if thou wishest the earth to draw near and heaven to speak to thee."

"With thee, heaven is always at hand," said Nichdali ; "but wherefore is it now to leave us ? "

"The son of Mahâdeva," said Krishna, "must die, pierced by an arrow, for the world to believe in his message."

"Explain this mystery to us."

"You will understand it after my death. Let us pray."

For seven days they prayed and performed ablutions. Krishna's face was often transfigured, and appeared shining in radiant bliss. On the seventh day, about sunset, the two women saw a band of archers mount to the hermitage.

"These are Kansa's bowmen seeking thee," said Sarasvati. "Master, defend thyself."

Krishna, however, on his knees at the foot of the cedar, continued praying. The archers came up and saw the women and the penitents. They were rough soldiers, some with yellow and others with black faces, and when they beheld the ecstatic

countenance of the saint, they stood still in amazement. At first they tried to draw him from his transport of rapture by questions and insults, and finally by hurling stones at him. Nothing, however, availed to change his attitude. Then they flung themselves upon him and bound him to the trunk of a cedar. Krishna, like one in a dream, offered no resistance. Then the archers, retiring to a distance, began inciting one another to shoot at him. When the first arrow had pierced his flesh, the blood gushed forth, and Krishna exclaimed: "Vasishta, the sons of the sun are victorious!" When the second arrow was quivering in his body, he said: "My radiant mother, grant that those who love me enter with me into thy light!" At the third, he simply uttered the word "Mahâdeva!" Then, with the name of Brahma on his lips, he gave up the ghost.

The sun had set. A mighty wind arose: a snow-storm came from the Himavat and beat down on the earth. The sky was veiled from sight, and a black whirlwind swept over the mountains. Terrified at what they had done, the murderers took to flight, and the two women, frozen with fear, lay unconscious on the ground, as though beneath a shower of blood.

Krishna's body was buried by his disciples in

the holy town of Dwarka. Sarasvati and Nichdali flung themselves on the funeral pile to rejoin their master, and the multitudes believed they saw the son of Mahâdeva issue from the flames in a body of light, taking away with him his two brides.

After these events, a great part of India adopted the worship of Vishnou, which blended the solar and the lunar cults in the religion of Brahma.

CHAPTER VIII

RADIANCE OF THE SOLAR WORD

SUCH is the legend of Krishna, reconstituted in its organic entirety, and reset in the perspective of history.

It throws a vivid light on the origin of Brahmanism. Naturally, it is impossible to affirm by positive documents that a real personage is hidden beneath the myth of Krishna. The threefold veil which masks the birth of all oriental religions is darker in India than elsewhere, for the Brahmans, absolute controllers of Hindu society, sole guardians of its traditions, have modelled and changed them often in the course of the ages. It is just, however, to add that they have faithfully preserved all its elements, and, if their secret teaching has developed with the centuries, its centre has never been disturbed. It would consequently be impossible to explain a character like that of Krishna by saying, as do the majority of European savants: "It is an old nurse's tale added on to a solar myth, with a dash of philosophic fancy dabbed on to

the whole." Such is not the foundation, we may be sure, of a religion which lasts thousands of years, gives birth to a wonderful poetry and several mighty systems of philosophy, resists the formidable attack of Bouddhism,[1] the Mongolian and Mahometan invasions, the English conquest, and even in its decadence retains the sentiment of its lofty origin, lost in the mists of time. No, there is always a great man at the birth of a mighty institution. Considering the dominant rôle of Krishna's personage, in epic and religious tradition, his human side on the one hand, and on the other his constant identification with God in manifestation or Vishnou, we are compelled to believe that he was the creator of the Vishnouite cult, which gave Brahmanism the virtue and prestige to which it attained. Accordingly, it is logical to admit that in the midst of the religious and social chaos created in primitive India by the invasion of

[1] The greatness of Sâkyamuni dwells in his sublime charity, his moral reforms, and the social revolution he effected by the overthrowing of ossified castes. The Bouddha gave to a decrepit Brahmanism a shock similar to that given by Protestantism to the Catholic world three hundred years ago; he forced it to gird up its loins for the fight, to enter upon a new lease of life. But Sâkyamuni added nothing to the esoteric doctrine of the Brahmans; he merely divulged certain portions of it. His psychology is, at bottom, the same although it follows a different path. (See my article on "La Légende de Bouddha," *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1ier juillet, 1885.)

naturalistic and passional cults, there appeared a luminous reformer who renewed the pure Aryan doctrine by the idea of the trinity and the manifested divine word, set the seal to his work by the sacrifice of his life, and thus gave to India its religious soul, a national mould, and a definite organisation.

The importance of Krishna appears to us even greater, and of a really universal character, if we note that his doctrine contains two primitive ideas, two organising principles for religious and esoteric philosophy. I mean the organic doctrine of the immortality of the soul or of progressive existences by reincarnation, and the corresponding one of the trinity or of the divine Word revealed in man. I have merely hinted, a few pages back,[1] at the philosophical bearing of this central conception, which, when well understood, finds its animating repercussion in every domain of science, art, and life. In conclusion, I will merely give a historical note.

The idea that God, Truth, Infinite Beauty and Goodness are revealed in conscious man with a redeeming power which springs to the very heights of heaven by the might of love and sacrifice, an idea, fruitful beyond all others, appears for the first

[1] See note on Devaki, with reference to Krishna's vision.

time in Krishna. It is personified when, issuing from its Aryan youth, mankind plunges more and more into the worship of matter. Krishna réveals to men the idea of the divine Word ; never more will they forget it. They will have only the greater desire for redeemers and sons of God as they are the more profoundly conscious of their own loss. After Krishna, there passes a powerful radiation, so to speak, of the solar Word, through the temples of Asia, of Africa, and of Europe. In Persia we have Mithras, the reconciler of the luminous Ormuzd and of the sombre Ahrimanes ; in Egypt, Horus, son of Osiris and Isis ; in Greece, Apollo, god of the sun and of the lyre ; Dionysos, who roused souls to life. Everywhere the solar god is a mediatorial god, and the light is also the word of life. Then is it not from this light-giving word of life that the Messianic idea springs forth ? In any case, it was by Krishna that this idea entered the ancient world ; it is by Jesus that it is to shed its rays throughout the whole earth.

It is my object to show how the doctrine of the divine ternary is linked with that of the soul and of its evolution, how and why they take one another for granted, the one completing the other. Let me say at once that their point of contact forms the vital centre, the light-giving focus of esoteric

doctrine. Looking at the mighty religions of India, Egypt, Greece, and Judæa only from the outside, nothing but discord, superstition, and chaos can be seen. But if one examines the symbols, questions the mysteries, and searches out the root-idea of the founders and of the prophets . . . harmony will be seen throughout. Along divers and often winding paths, one will reach the same point, so that penetration into the arcanum of one of these religions means entrance into the secrets of the rest. Then a strange phenomenon takes place. By degrees, but in a widening circle, the doctrine of the initiates is seen to shine forth in the centre of the religions, like a sun clearing away its nebula. Each religion appears as a different planet. With each we change both atmosphere and celestial orientation; still, it is always the same sun which illumines us. India, the mighty dreamer, plunges us along with herself into the dream of eternity. . . . Egypt, sublime and imposing, austere as death, invites us to the journey beyond the grave. Enchanting Greece sweeps us along to the magic feasts of life, and gives to her mysteries the seduction of her form, charming or terrible in turn, and of her ever-passionate soul. Finally, Pythagoras scientifically formulates the esoteric doctrine, gives it perhaps the most complete and

concise expression it has ever had ; Plato and the Alexandrians were merely its vulgarisers. We have now seen the source of this doctrine in the jungles of the Ganges and the solitudes of the Himalayas.

END OF "KRISHNA"

ORPHEUS

(THE MYSTERIES OF DIONYSOS)

Those innumerable souls, which spring from the great soul of the World, how they roll about and seek one another throughout the mighty universe! They fall from planet to planet, and, in the abyss of space, lament the home they have forgotten. . . . These are thy tears, Dionysos. . . . O Mighty Spirit, Divine Liberator, receive back thy daughters into thy bosom of light!—*Orphic fragment.*

"Eurydice! Thou Divine Light!" said Orpheus, with his last breath. "Eurydice!" moaned the seven chords of his Lyre as they snapped asunder. And his rolling head, unceasingly borne along on the stream of time, still exclaims: "Eurydice! Eurydice!"—*Legend of Orpheus.*

CHAPTER I

PREHISTORIC GREECE—THE BACCHANTES—APPEARANCE OF ORPHEUS

WITHIN the sanctuaries of Apollo, which held to the Orphic tradition, a mysterious fête was celebrated about the time of the spring equinox. It was then that the narcissus burst yearly into flower near the fountain of Castalia. The tripods, the lyres of the temple, gave forth quivering vibrations of their own accord, and the invisible God was regarded as returning from the country of the Hyperboreans on a chariot drawn by swans. Then the high priestess, in the garb of a Muse, and wearing a laurel wreath, her forehead girt with sacred fillets, in the presence of none but initiates, chanted the birth of Orpheus, son of Apollo, and of a priestess of this god. She invoked the soul of Orpheus, father of mystics, melodious saviour of men; sovereign, immortal Orpheus, thrice crowned, in hell, on earth, and in heaven, moving among the constellations and the gods, a star shining on his brow.

The mystic chant of the Delphic priestess alluded to one of the numerous secrets preserved by the priests of Apollo, and unknown to the generality of mankind. Orpheus was the life-giving genius of sacred Greece, the rouser of her divine soul. His seven-stringed lyre embraces the universe. Each chord corresponds to one form of the human soul, contains the law of both a science and an art. We have lost the key to its full harmony, but the divers forms have never ceased vibrating in our ears. The theurgic and dionysiac impulse Orpheus succeeded in communicating to Greece has been passed on by her to the whole of Europe. The present age no longer believes there is any beauty in life. If, in spite of all, the age still retains a profound remembrance, a secret invincible hope of such beauty, it owes it to the sublime inspiration of Orpheus. Let us welcome in him the great initiator of Greece, the Ancestor of Poetry and Music regarded as revealers of Divine Truth.

Before, however, reconstructing the history of Orpheus from the deepest traditions of the sanctuaries, let us say a few words regarding Greece at the time of his appearance.

He was contemporary with Moses, five centuries before Homer, and thirteen centuries before the

Christ. India was plunging into her *Kali-Youg*, her age of darkness, and no longer presented more than the mere shadow of her former splendour. Assyria, which, through Babylonian tyranny, had let loose on the world the demon of anarchy, continued to trample on Asia. Egypt, mighty by reason of her Pharaohs, and of the learning of her priests, resisted this universal decomposition with all her might; but her sphere of influence did not extend beyond the Euphrates and the Mediterranean. Israel was about to raise in the wilderness the principle of the male God and divine unity, by the thunder-voice of Moses, but the earth had not yet heard its echoes.

Greece was greatly divided, both as regards her religious and her political life.

The mountainous peninsula, its delicate outlines stretching into the Mediterranean, surrounded by a garland of isles, had been peopled for thousands of years by an offshoot of the white race, a neighbour to the primitive Scythians and Celts. This race had been subjected to the mingled influences of all the previous civilisations. Colonies from India, Egypt, and Phœnicia had swarmed over the banks of the land, peopling its promontories and valleys with various races, customs, and divinities. Mighty fleets passed, with sails un-

furled, beneath the legs of the Colossus of Rhodes, standing on the two moles of its harbour. The sea of the Cyclades, where, in clear weather, the navigator always sees some island or shore appear on the horizon, was furrowed with the ruddy prows of the Phœnicians and the dark vessels of Lydian pirates. Within their hollow ships they carried away the riches of Asia and Africa: ivory, painted pottery, Syrian ware, gold vases, purple, and pearls . . . and often women, abducted from some savage shore.

This mingling of races had given birth to a smooth, harmonious idiom, a mixture of the primitive Celt, of Zend, of Sanscrit, and of Phœnician. This language which depicted the majesty of the ocean under the name of Poseidon, and the serenity of the heavens under that of Ouranos, imitated every voice of nature, from the chirping of birds to the clash of swords and the roar of the tempest. It was multi-coloured, like its intensely blue sea, with ever-changing azure tints; it was of many sounds, like the waves murmuring in its gulfs or roaring over its innumerable cliffs . . . *poluphlosboio Thalassa* . . . as Homer calls it.

Accompanying these merchants or pirates were often priests, their masters, directing or command-

ing them. In the ship they carefully concealed a wooden image of some divinity or other. It was doubtless roughly carved, and the sailors of those times had the same fetishism for it as many of our sailors have for their Madonna. None the less, these priests were in possession of certain sciences, and the divinity they carried off from their temple to foreign lands, represented in their mind a conception of nature, a collection of laws, and a civil and religious organisation. In those times the whole intellectual life of a community was born in the sanctuaries. Juno was worshipped at Argos, Artemis in Arcadia; in Paphos and Corinth the Phœnician Astarté had become Aphrodité . . . born of the foam of the sea. Several initiators had appeared in Attica. An Egyptian colony had introduced in Eleusis the worship of Isis under the form of Demeter (Ceres), mother of the gods. Between Mount Hymettus and the Attic heights, ranging between Athens and Marathon, Erechtheus had established the worship of a virgin goddess, daughter of the blue sky, friend of the olive and of wisdom. During the invasions, the population, at the first signal of alarm, took refuge on the Acropolis, clustering around the goddess as they would around a living victory.

Above the local divinities there reigned a few male

and cosmogonic gods. Sequestered, however, on the lofty mountains, and eclipsed by the brilliant cortège of feminine divinities, these had little influence. The Solar God, the Delphic Apollo,[1] already existed, though he still played only a minor rôle. There were priests of Zeus at the foot of Ida's snowy peaks, on the heights of Arcadia, and beneath the oaks of Dodona. The people, however, preferred the goddesses who represented Nature in her seductive or terrible might before the mysterious and universal God. The subterranean streams of Arcadia, the caverns of the mountains, descending to the very bowels of the earth, the volcanic eruptions in the islands of the Ægean Sea, had early inclined the Greeks to the worship of the mysterious forces of the earth. Thus, in her heights, as in her depths, Nature had been sounded, feared, and

[1] According to the ancient tradition of the Thracians, poetry had been invented by *Olen*. Now this name, in Phœnician, means the Universal Being. Apollo has the same root: *Ap Olen*, or *Ap Wholon*, means Universal Father. In primitive ages, the Universal Being was worshipped at Delphi under the name of Olen. The cult of Apollo was introduced by a priestly innovator under the influence of the doctrine of the solar word, which at that time was spreading throughout the sanctuaries of India and Egypt. This reformer identified the Universal Father with his double manifestation, the hyperphysical light and the visible sun. Still, this reform scarcely issued from the depths of the sanctuary. It was Orpheus who gave new power to the solar word of Apollo, infusing into it a new electric life by means of the Mysteries of Dionysos. (See Fabre d'Olivet: *Les vers dorés de Pythagore.*)

venerated. Nevertheless, as all these divinities had neither social centre nor religious synthesis, they waged desperate war against one another. The hostile temples, rival cities, and diverse peoples, divided by rites and ceremonies, as well as by the ambition of priests and kings, impelled by feelings of hatred and envy, engaged in bloody struggles against one another.

Over beyond Greece lay the wild and savage land of Thrace. Away to the north, ranges of mountains, covered with giant oaks and crowned with rocks, followed one another in undulating ridges, spread out like enormous circuses or seemingly entangled together in knotty clusters. The winds from the north lashed their wooded flanks, whilst their peaks were often swept by howling tempests. Shepherds in the valleys, and warriors from the plains, alike belonged to this strong white race, the mighty reserve of the Doric element of Greece. A masculine race *par excellence*, whose beauty is testified to in the strongly marked features and decision of character, whilst its ugliness finds expression in the horrible and imposing element noticeable in the masks of the Medusa or the ancient Gorgons.

Like all ancient nations, such as Egypt, Israel and Etruria, which received their organisation from

the Mysteries, Greece had her sacred geography, in which each country became the symbol of a purely intellectual and supraterrestrial region of the mind. Why was Thrace[1] always regarded by the Greeks as the holy country, *par excellence* the country of light, and the veritable home of the Muses? Because these lofty mountains were the sites of the oldest sanctuaries of Kronos, of Zeus, and of Ouranos. Thence had descended in rhythmic harmony all sacred laws, arts, and poetry. Of this the fabled poets of Thrace are a proof. The names of Thamyris, of Linus, and of Amphion correspond,

[1] Thracia, according to Fabre d'Olivet, is derived from the Phœnician Rakhiwa, the ethereal space or firmament. It is certain that the name of Thrace had a symbolical meaning for the poets and initiates of Greece, such as Pindar, Æschylus, or Plato, and signified the land of pure doctrine and of the sacred poetry proceeding therefrom. Accordingly this word had for them a historical and philosophical signification. Philosophically it pointed to an intellectual region, the sum total of the doctrines and traditions which state that the universe proceeds from a divine intelligence. Historically the name recalled the country and race in which the Doric doctrine and poetry, that vigorous offshoot of the ancient Aryan spirit, had first come into being, afterwards, in the sanctuary of Apollo, to spring into full bloom in Greece. The utility of this kind of symbolism is proved by subsequent history. At Delphi, there was a class of *Thracian priests*, guardians of the lofty doctrine. The tribunal of the Amphyctions was, in ancient times, defended by a *Thracian guard*, *i.e.* by a guard of initiate warriors. The tyranny of Sparta suppressed this incorruptible phalanx, replacing it by mercenaries of brute force. Later on, the verb "to thracise" was applied in irony to the devotees of the ancient doctrines.

it may be, to real personages, but they personify, above all, according to the language of the temples, so many kinds of poetry. Each of them consecrates the victory of one theology over another. In the temples of those times, history was only written in allegory. The individual was nothing ; the doctrine and the work everything. Thamyris, who sang of the war of the Titans and was struck blind by the Muses, tells of the defeat of cosmogonic poetry by new methods. Linus, who introduced into Greece the melancholy chants of Asia and was slain by Hercules, enables us to trace the invasion into Thrace of emotional poetry, of sad though voluptuous nature, which was at first rejected by the virile mind of the Dorians of the north. At the same time, he notifies the victory of a lunar over a solar cult. On the other hand, Amphion, who, according to allegorical legend, set stones in motion by the magic of his songs, and built temples by the strains of his lyre, represents the plastic force which the solar doctrine and the orthodox Doric poetry exercised over the art of Greece and over the entire Hellenic civilisation.[1]

[1] Strabo positively affirms that ancient poetry was only the language of allegory. Denys of Halicarnassus confirms this, and acknowledges that the mysteries of nature and the sublimest conceptions of morality have been obscured beneath a veil. Accordingly, it is by no means metaphorically that ancient poetry was called *the language of*

Far different is the light with which Orpheus shines! He beams throughout the ages with the personal ray of a creating genius, whose soul in its masculine depths quivers with love for the Eternal-Feminine, response being finally given by this Eternal-Feminine who lives and palpitates beneath a threefold form in Nature, Humanity, and Heaven. The worship in the sanctuaries, the traditions of the initiates, the voices of poets and philosophers . . . and, more than all else, his work, an organic Greece . . . bear witness to his living reality!

At this time Thrace was engaged in a mighty and desperate struggle. The solar and lunar cults were disputing for supremacy. This war between the worshippers of the sun and of the moon was not, as might be imagined, an idle dispute between two superstitions. These two cults represented two

the Gods. This secret and mystical signification, constituting its might and charm, is contained in the very name itself. The majority of linguists have derived the word *poetry* from the Greek verb ποιεῖν to make, create; an apparently simple and quite natural etymology, though little in conformity with the sacred language of the temples, whence issued primitive poetry. It is more logical to admit, with Fabre d'Olivet, that πολησις comes from the Phœnician "*phohe*" (mouth, voice, language, speech) and "*ish*" (Superior Being, Principal Being; figuratively, God). The Etrurian Aes or Aesar, the Gallic Aes, the Scandinavian Ase, the Coptic Os (Lord), and the Egyptian Osiris have the same root.

theologies, two cosmogonies, two religions, and two social organisations absolutely opposed to each other. The Ouranian and solar cults had their temples in the lofty and mountainous districts, with men as priests; their laws were very stringent. The lunar cults reigned in the forests and deep valleys, they had women as priestesses, voluptuous rites, an inordinate practice of the occult arts, and a taste for such excitements as orgies present. There was war to the death between the priests of the sun and the priestesses of the moon. It was the struggle of the sexes, ancient and inevitable, open or concealed, between the woman and the man, between the masculine and the feminine principle, filling history with its alternate issues in which the secret of the world's history is worked out. Just as the perfect fusion of the masculine and of the feminine constitute the very essence and mystery of divinity, so the equilibrium of these two principles can alone produce mighty civilisations.

Everywhere in Thrace as in Greece the male deities, both cosmogonic and solar, had been banished to lofty mountains in deserted countries. The people preferred the disquieting cortège of the feminine deities who evoked the dangerous passions and the blind forms of nature. These cults

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gave the higher form of divinity to the female sex.

Frightful abuses began to be the result; among the Thracians, the priestesses of the moon or of the threefold Hecate had proved their supremacy by appropriating the ancient worship of Bacchus and giving it a bloody and formidable character. In token of their victory they had assumed the name of Bacchantes, as though to testify to their supremacy, to the sovereign reign of woman, and her rule over man.

Magicians, seducers, and blood-stained sacrificers of human victims in turn, they had their sanctuaries in wild out-of-the-way valleys. By what sombre charm and ardent curiosity were men and women attracted into these solitary wilds, full of luxurious overflowing vegetation? Naked forms . . . lascivious dances in the depths of the woods . . . laughs and loud shrieks . . . and a hundred Bacchantes flung themselves on the stranger, hurling him to the ground. He was forced either to swear submission to themselves and to their rites, or to perish. The Bacchantes tamed panthers and lions, making them take part in their fêtes. When night came, their arms encircled with serpents, they flung themselves down before the threefold Hecate, then, with frantic dances,

they summoned Bacchus from beneath the earth, the bull-faced Bacchus, of double sex.[1] Woe to the stranger, woe to the priest of Jupiter or of Apollo, who played the spy on them. Such a one was immediately torn to pieces.

The primitive Bacchantes were accordingly the Druidesses of Greece. Many Thracian chiefs remained faithful to the old male cults. The Bacchantes, however, had insinuated themselves into the good graces of some of their kings, whose barbarian customs had been refined by Asiatic luxury. These had been seduced by voluptuousness and tamed by terror. In this way, the Gods had divided Thrace into two hostile camps. The priests of Jupiter and Apollo on their deserted mountain-tops were becoming powerless against Hecate, whose might was extending in the burning valleys, and who, from her depths, was beginning to threaten the altars of the sons of light.

[1] The bull-faced Bacchus is mentioned in the 29th Orphic hymn. This is a souvenir of an ancient cult which bears no reference to the pure tradition of Orpheus. The latter completely refined and transfigured the popular Bacchus into the celestial Dionysos, symbol of the divine spirit evolving through all the reigns of nature. Strange to relate, we find the infernal Bacchus of the Bacchantes in the bull-faced Satan evoked and worshipped by the witches of the Middle Ages in their nightly revels. This is the famous Baphomet, votaries of whom, in order to bring them into discredit, the Templars were accused of being.

About this time there had appeared in Thrace a young man of royal descent and wonderfully seductive personality. He was said to be the son of a priestess of Apollo ; his melodious voice possessed a strange charm. He spoke of the Gods in new unheard-of strains, and seemed to be inspired. His auburn locks, the pride of the Doric race, fell in golden curls over his shoulders, and the music which flowed from his lips gave the corners of his mouth a gentle though sorrowful contour, whilst his deep blue eyes beamed forth tenderness and magic power. The wild Thracians fled from his glance, but women skilled in the art of charms said that the azure philtre of his eyes mingled the darts of the sun with the soft caresses of the moon. The very Bacchantes, attracted by his beauty, often prowled near him, like amorous panthers proud of their spotted skins, smiling at his words though they did not understand them.

Suddenly, this young man, who was called the *son of Apollo*, had disappeared. He was said to be dead, to have descended to the infernal regions ; but he had secretly escaped to Samothrace, and thence to Egypt, where he had asked for shelter from the priests of Memphis. After having accomplished their Mysteries, he had returned, twenty years later, under an initiate-name which he had obtained after

having passed his tests, receiving it from his masters as a sign of his mission. He was now called *Orpheus* or *Arpha*.[1]

The oldest sanctuary of Jupiter was at that time being established on Mount Kaoukaion. In former times its hierophants had been great pontiffs. From the summit of this mountain, sheltered from all acts of violence, they had reigned over the whole of Thrace. Since, however, the lower divinities had gained the upper hand, their adherents were few and their temples almost abandoned. The priests of Mount Kaoukaion welcomed the initiate from Egypt as a saviour. The science and enthusiasm of Orpheus won over the greater part of the Thracians, completely transformed the worship of Bacchus, and tamed the Bacchantes. Very soon his influence made itself felt in all the sanctuaries of Greece. It was he who established the rule of Zeus over Thrace, and that of Apollo over Delphi, where he laid the foundations of the tribunal of the Amphyctions, which became the social unity of Greece. Finally, by the creation of the Mysteries, he formed the religious soul of his country, for, from the height of initiation, he founded the religion of Zeus along with that of

[1] A Phœnician word composed of "*aour*," light, and "*rophae*," healing—he who heals by light.

Dionysos, enfolding both in one universal idea. The initiates received by means of his instruction the pure light of sublime truths, and this very light filtered down to the people in a more temperate though none the less beneficent form under the veil of poetry and enchanting fêtes.

It was in this way that Orpheus had become pontiff of Thrace, high priest of the Olympian Zeus, and the revealer of the heavenly Dionysos to the initiates.

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CHAPTER II

THE TEMPLE OF JUPITER

MOUNT KAOUKAION rises near the source of the Ebro. It is girdled by a chain of mighty oaks and crowned by a circle of rocks and cyclopean stones. For thousands of years this mountain had been a holy place. The Pelasgians and the Celts, the Scythians and the Getae, had driven one another from the spot, and had come in turn to worship their divers Gods. When man mounts so high, is it not always the same God he seeks? If not, why with so much pain and trouble should he build for Him a dwelling high up in the winds and clouds of heaven?

A temple dedicated to Jupiter now rises in the centre of the sacred spot, mighty and impregnable as a fortress. At the entrance stands a peristyle of four Doric columns, its enormous shaft clearly outlined against a dull-looking portico.

In the zenith the sky is clear, though the tempest is still howling over the mountains of

Thrace, the valleys and peaks of which stretch out in the distance; a storm-tossed pitchy ocean, lit up by flashes of lightning.

It is the hour for sacrifice; the only sacrifice performed by the priests of Kaoukaion is that by fire. They descend the temple steps and kindle the offering of sweet-smelling wood with a torch from the sanctuary. Finally, the pontiff leaves the temple. Clad in white linen, like the rest, a wreath of cyprus and myrtle is placed on his head. In his hand he holds an ebony ivory-handled sceptre, whilst around his waist is a golden girdle, on which crystals cast gloomy flashes of light, symbols of mysterious rule. This is Orpheus.

By the hand he leads a disciple, a child of Delphi, who, pale and trembling, listens to the words of the mighty initiate with enraptured mysterious thrill. Orpheus, bent on reassuring the mystic, chosen one, gently places his arms round the disciple's shoulders. A smile is in his eyes; then, of a sudden, a flash of light shines forth from their depths. As the priests at their feet turn round the altar and chant the hymn of fire, Orpheus solemnly speaks to the beloved mystic words of initiation, which fall like heavenly dew deep into his heart.

Hear now the winged words of Orpheus to the young disciple :

"Turn thy thoughts within, that thou mayest rise to the first principle of all things, to the mighty Triad blazing in immaculate Ether. Burn up thy body in the fire of thy thought, detach thyself from matter, as does the flame from the wood it consumes. Then thy spirit shall rise into the pure ether of eternal Causes, as the eagle ascends to the throne of Jupiter.

"I will now reveal to thee the secrets of the worlds, the soul of Nature, the essence of God. First of all, listen to the great Secret. One being alone reigns in lofty heaven as in the abyss of earth, the thunder-rolling, ethereal Zeus. His attributes are : deep counsel, powerful hate, and delightful love. He reigns in the depths of earth and in the heights of the starry sky. Breath of all things, fire untamed, male and female, a King, a Power, a God, a great Master.

"Jupiter is the divine Bridegroom and Bride, Man and Woman, Father and Mother. From their sacred marriage, from their never-ending nuptials, incessantly issue Fire and Water, Earth and Ether, Night and Day, the haughty Titans, the unchanging Gods, and the floating seed of men.

"The loves of Heaven and Earth are not known to the profane. The mysteries of the Bridegroom and the Bride are unveiled only to divine men. Just now these rocks were shaken by thunder, the lightning flash fell like a living fire, a rolling flame, and the mountain echoes responded joyfully. But thou didst quake with fear, knowing neither whence comes this fire, nor where it strikes. It is the male creative fire, the seed of Zeus. It springs from the heart and brain of Jupiter, and enters into all beings. When the thunderbolt falls, it flashes forth from his right hand. We, however, his priests, know its essence, we avoid and at times direct the shafts.

"And now, behold the firmament. Regard this brilliant circle of constellations over which is flung the thin veil of the Milky Way, the dust of suns and worlds. See how Orion flashes in beauty, how the Heavenly Twins and the Lyre beam forth. This is the body of the divine Bride turning round in harmonious motion, in unison with the Bridegroom's songs. Look with the eyes of the spirit, and thou shalt see her head thrown back, and her arms extended; thou shalt raise her star-decked veil.

"Jupiter is the divine Bridegroom and Bride. This is the first mystery.

"And now, child of Delphi, prepare for the second initiation. Thrill and weep, enjoy and worship! Thy spirit is about to plunge into the burning zone where the mighty Demiurgus is mingling the soul and the world in the cup of life. After tasting this intoxicating beverage, all beings forget their divine life and descend into the painful abyss of incarnation.

"Zeus is the mighty Demiurgus. Dionysos is his son, his manifested word. Dionysos, glorious spirit, living intelligence, was the splendour of his father's dwelling. One day as he was bending forward, contemplating the abyss of heaven and its constellations, he saw reflected in the azure depths his own image with outstretched arms. Enamoured of this beautiful phantom, his own double, he plunged forward to grasp it. But the image ever escaped him, drawing him down to the depths of the abyss. Finally he found himself in a shady sweet-smelling valley, in full enjoyment of the voluptuous breezes which gently caressed his body. Deep in a grotto he perceived Persephône. Maïa, the beautiful weaver, was weaving a veil over whose surface could be seen floating the images of all beings. Mute with ravished delight, he stood there before the divine virgin. At this moment, the proud Titans

and the free Titanides saw him. The former jealous of his beauty, and the latter impelled by a mad passion, flung themselves on him like the raging elements, and tore him to pieces. After sharing out his limbs they boiled them in water; his heart they buried. The thunderbolts of Jupiter destroyed the Titans, and Minerva carried away into the Ether the heart of Dionysos; there it became a shining sun. From the smoke of his body have sprung forth the souls of men ascending again to heaven. When the pale shades have again united into one whole the burning heart of the God, they will arise like flames, and Dionysos in his entirety will spring into ever-renewed life in the heights of the Empyreum.

"This is the mystery of the death of Dionysos; now listen to that of his resurrection. Men are the flesh and blood of Dionysos; the unhappy are his scattered members, seeking to be reunited by mutual torture in crime and hatred during thousands of existences. The fiery heat of the earth, the abyss of the forces below, ever draws them deeper and deeper into the abyss, tearing and torturing them more and more. But we, initiates, we who know what is above and below, are the saviours of souls, the Hermes of men. Like magnets we attract them to us, ourselves being

attracted by the Gods. Thus, by celestial incantations, we reconstitute the living body of the divinity. We cause the heavens to weep and the earth to rejoice; like precious jewels we bear in our hearts the tears of all beings to change them into smiles. In us God dies; in us, also, he returns to birth."

Thus spoke Orpheus. The disciple of Delphi knelt down before his master, with arms raised in the gesture of a suppliant. The pontiff of Jupiter laid his hand on the young man's head as he pronounced the following words of consecration:

"May ineffable Zeus, may Dionysos who thrice reveals himself, in hell, on earth, and in heaven, be propitious to thy youth, and pour into thine head the knowledge of the Gods!"

Then the initiate, leaving the peristyle of the temple, threw storax into the altar fire, and thrice invoked thunder-compelling Zeus. The priests, chanting a hymn, wheeled around in circles. The king-pontiff had remained, absorbed in thought, under the portico, his arm resting on a monolith. The disciple returned to him—

"Melodious Orpheus!" he said; "thou child beloved of the immortals, and gentle healer of souls, ever since I heard thee sing hymns to the

Gods at the fête of the Delphic Apollo, thou hast taken possession of my heart, and I will follow thee wheresoever thou goest. Thy songs are like intoxicating wine, thy teachings like a bitter drink which relieves the tired body and gives renewed strength to the limbs."

"The path which leads from here to the Gods is difficult," said Orpheus, who seemed rather to be replying to inner voices than to his disciple. "A flowery path, a steep ascent, and then rocks shaken by thunderbolts, with the immensity of space all around. Such is the destiny of the Seer and the Prophet on earth. My child, remain in the flowery paths of the plain; do not seek anything beyond."

"My thirst increases in proportion as thou quenchest it," said the young initiate. "Thou hast told me of the essence of the Gods. Great master of mysteries, inspired by divine Eros, shall I ever *see them?*"

"With the eyes of the spirit," said the pontiff of Jupiter, "not with those of the body. Only with the latter canst thou see now. A lengthy preparation, the endurance of great pain, is needed to open the eyes of the soul."

"Thou alone canst open them, Orpheus! With thee by my side, what have I to fear?"

"Dost thou desire this power? Then listen! In Thessaly, by the enchanted vale of Tempe rises a mystic temple, closed against the profane. There Dionysos manifests himself to mystics and seers. In one year from now, I invite thee to this fête, when, plunging thee into a magic sleep, I will open thine eyes on the heavenly world. Let thy life until then be chaste and thy soul pure. For thou must know that the light of the Gods terrifies the weak and slays the profane. Come into my dwelling, and I will give thee the book necessary for thy preparation."

The master returned with the Delphic disciple within the temple, leading him into the large reserved cella. There stood burning an Egyptian lamp which was never extinguished, held by a winged genius, and wrought in forged metal. Numerous rolls of papyrus covered with Egyptian hieroglyphs and Phœnician characters were enclosed in boxes of sweet-smelling cedar-wood, as well as books written in the Greek language by Orpheus, and containing his secret science and doctrine.[1]

[1] Among the numerous lost books which the Orphic writers of Greece attributed to Orpheus were *The Argonautics*, dealing with the mighty Hermetic work; a *Demetriad*, a poem on the mother of the Gods, to which corresponded a *Cosmogony; The Sacred Songs of Bacchus*, or *The Pure Spirit*, which had a *Theogony* as their comple-

The master and disciple conversed together in the cella for a portion of the night.

ment, without mentioning other works such as *The Veil* or *The Net of Souls*, the art of mysteries and rites; *The Book of Mutations*, chemistry and alchemy; *The Corybantes*, or terrestrial mysteries and earthquakes; *Anemoscopy*, science of the atmosphere, natural and magical botany, &c.

CHAPTER III

DIONYSIAC FÊTE IN THE VALLEY OF TEMPE [1]

IT was in Thessaly, in the cool and fragrant valley of Tempe. The holy night which Orpheus had consecrated to the mysteries of Dionysos had come. Conducted by one of the servants of the temple, the disciple of Delphi proceeded along a narrow, deep gorge, on either side of which rose cliffs with towering peaks. Throughout the dark night nothing could be heard save the murmur of the stream flowing between its verdant banks. Finally, the full moon appeared from behind a mountain, its yellow disc shining out above the

[1] Pausanias relates that a procession was instituted every year from Delphi to the vale of Tempe, to gather the sacred laurel. This significant custom reminded the disciples of Apollo that they were connected with the Orphic initiation, and that the first inspiration of Orpheus was the antique and vigorous trunk whose ever-young and living branches were gathered by the temple of Delphi. This fusion of the Apollonian and the Orphic tradition is also shown in another manner in the history of the temple. In fact, the well-known dispute between Apollo and Bacchus for the tripod of the temple has no other meaning. Bacchus, the legend says, ceded the tripod to his brother, and withdrew to Mount Parnassus. This means that Dionysos and the Orphic initiation remained the privilege of the initiates, whilst Apollo gave his oracles to the outside world.

sombre rocks. Its subtle magnetic light dissolved the darkness, and suddenly the enchanted valley showed forth in the glory of Elysian light. For a moment there could be seen its turf-covered ground, its groves of ash and poplar trees, its crystal springs, ivy-covered grottoes, and its winding stream enlacing its woody isles. A light vapour seemed to envelop the plants in voluptuous sleep. The bright surface of the fountains seemed ruffled with the sighs of nymphs, whilst vague flute-music escaped from the motionless reeds. Over all hovered the silent incantation of Diana.

The disciple of Delphi proceeded on his way as though in a dream. At times he would halt and breathe in a delightful odour of honeysuckle and laurel. But the magic light appeared for only a moment, then a cloud overshadowed the moon. Darkness covered all, the rocks resumed their threatening aspect, lights flashed on every side under the thickly foliaged trees, by the bank of the stream and in the depths of the valley.

"These are the mystics," said the aged guide of the temple, "they are starting on their march. Each procession has a torch-bearer as guide. We will follow them."

The travellers met choirs issuing from the groves and proceeding along the paths. First they saw

pass by *the mystics of the youthful Bacchus*, youths clad in long tunics of fine linen and crowned with ivy. They carried goblets of carved wood, symbols of the cup of life. Then came young men, proud and strong, these were called *the mystics of Hercules the wrestler*. Their characteristics were: short tunics, bare legs, lion's skin across tunics and loins, heads crowned with wreaths of olive. Afterwards followed the inspired ones, *the mystics of the limb-dispersed Bacchus*, with striped panther skin around the body, thyrsus in hand, and hair tressed with purple fillets.

Passing near a cavern, they saw *the mystics of Aïdoneus and subterranean Eros*, lying prostrate on the ground. These were men mourning for dead relatives and friends. In low accents they chanted: "Aïdoneus! Aïdoneus! Give back to us those thou hast taken away, or else grant that we may descend into thy kingdom." The wind moaned in the cavern and seemed mingled with funereal jeers and death sobs. Of a sudden, a mystic turned towards the disciple of Delphi and said to him: "Thou hast crossed the threshold of Aïdoneus, never more shalt thou behold the light of the living." Another passed close by him whispering in his ear: "Shade, thou shalt be the prey of the shadow; thou who hast come from Night, return to

Erebus!" Then he ran hurriedly away. The disciple of Delphi was horror-struck. He whispered to his guide: "What does this mean?" The servant of the temple seemed to have heard nothing, and merely replied: "We must cross the bridge, no one can escape the goal."

They crossed a wooden bridge thrown over the Peneus.

"Where do those plaintive voices and that doleful chant come from?" asked the neophyte. "What are those white shadows walking in long files under the poplars there?"

"They are women on the way to be initiated into the mysteries of Dionysos."

"Do you know their names?"

"Here no one's name is known, every one forgets his own. Just as, at the entrance of the consecrated domain, the mystics leave behind their polluted garments, to bathe in the stream and clothe themselves afresh in pure linen robes, so each of them abandons his name and takes another. For seven nights and seven days they are transformed, they pass into another life. Look at all these processions of women. They are not grouped together according to their families or countries, but according to the God who inspires them."

They saw pass before them winding streams of

maidens crowned with narcissus and clad in azure peplums, these the guide called, *Persephone's companion nymphs.* Chaste and modest, they carried small chests, urns, and votive vases in their arms. Then, dressed in red peplums followed *the mystic lovers, the ardent brides and seekers after Aphrodite;* these disappeared in the depths of a wood, whence could be heard issuing violent cries mingled with languishing sobs. These gradually faded away. Then a passionate choir of voices came from the dark myrtle grove, rising to heaven in slow quivering throbs: "Eros! Thou hast given us pain! Aphrodite! Thou hast broken our limbs! We have covered our breasts with the skin of the fawn, but within our hearts we bear the bleeding purple wounds. Our hearts are devouring fires. Others die of poverty; it is love which is slaying us. Devour us, Eros! Eros! or else, deliver us, O Dionysos!"

Another procession approached. These were women completely clad in black wool with long trailing veils, all afflicted by some great grief. The guide named them *the weeping matrons of Persephone.* Here stood a mighty marble mausoleum. Around it they all knelt, and with loud shrieks began to unbind their tresses. To the strophe of desire they replied by the antistrophe of grief.

"Persephone!" they said, "thou art dead, carried off by Aïdoneus; thou hast descended into the kingdom of the dead. We, however, who moan for our beloved, are both living and dead. May the day never more appear for us! May the earth which covers thee, O Mighty Goddess, give us eternal sleep, and may my shade rove about, one with that of the beloved! Hear us, Persephone! Persephone!"

In the presence of these strange scenes, and beneath the contagious delirium of such profound grief, the disciple of Delphi felt harassed by innumerable torturing sensations. He was no longer himself. The thoughts, desires, and pains of all these beings had become his own. His soul was portioned out over a thousand bodies, he was filled with mortal anguish. No longer knew he whether he was a man or a shade.

Then an initiate of lofty form, who was passing along, halted, and said:

"Peace be to suffering shades! Look upwards, women, to the light of Dionysos, Orpheus awaits you!"

They all clustered around him in silence, plucking off the leaves from their asphodel wreaths, and with his thyrsus he showed them the way. The women turned aside to drink at a fountain

from wooden cups. Then the processions formed again and the cortège was continued, young maidens in front singing the following dirge: "Wave the poppies! Drink Lethe's stream! Give us the flower we long for, and grant that the narcissus may bloom anew for our sisters! Persephone! Persephone!"

The disciple proceeded a considerable distance farther with his guide, crossing meadows filled with daffodils. As they advanced beneath the shades of the gently-soughing poplars he heard mournful chants in the air; whence they came he knew not. He saw horrible masks and small wax figures hanging from the branches, like babes in swaddling clothes. Here and there small barques crossed the stream bearing passengers as peaceful and silent as the dead. Finally the valley extended its borders, lofty mountain peaks pierced the clear sky, and dawn appeared. Away in the distance could be seen the gloomy gorges of Ossa, with its deep-cut abysses and heaped-up crumbling rocks. Nearer, in the midst of a belt of mountains, the temple of Dionysos shone out on the summit of a tree-clad hill.

The sun was now gilding the lofty peaks with its new glory. As they approached the temple they saw processions of mystics and women and

groups of initiates arriving from every direction. This mass of human beings, to all appearance grave and self-possessed, though inwardly stirred to its depths, met at the foot of the hill and scaled the approaches of the sanctuary. Waving branches and thyrsi, they greeted one another as friends. The guide had disappeared, and the disciple of Delphi found himself, he knew not how, amid a group of initiates with shining hair, intertwined with wreaths and fillets of divers colours. Though he had never seen them, some blest memory caused him to believe that he recognised them. They too seemed to be awaiting him. They bowed to him as to a brother, congratulating him on his fortunate arrival. Carried off by his group, and as though borne aloft on wings, he mounted to the six highest steps of the temple, when a flash of blinding light burst upon his eyes. It was the rising sun casting his first dart into the valley, and inundating with his dazzling rays these mystics and initiates grouped on the temple stairs and about the hill.

Immediately a choir of voices chanted forth a pæan. The bronze gates of the temple opened of themselves, and Orpheus, prophet and hierophant, appeared, followed by the Hermes and the torch-bearer. A thrill of joy ran through the

disciple of Delphi on recognising him. Clad in purple, a lyre of ivory and gold in his hand, Orpheus, in the beauty of eternal youth, said :

"Hail to you who have come to be born again after the trials of earth, you who are now passing through the new birth. Come, you mystics, you women and initiates who are issuing from the gloom of night, come and drink in the light of the temple. Rejoice, you who have suffered ; and rest, you weary strugglers. The sun I call down upon your heads, and which will soon shine in your souls, is not the sun of mortals ; it is the unsullied light of Dionysos, the glorious sun of the initiates. You shall overcome by your past sufferings, by the effort which has brought you here ; if you believe in the divine word, you have already overcome. For after the long cycle of lives wrapt in darkness, you shall finally issue from the painful round of births, and shall all find yourselves again as one body, one soul, in the light of Dionysos !

"The divine spark which guides us on earth is within us ; it becomes a flame in the temple, a star in the sky. Thus grows the light of Truth ! Listen to the vibrations of the seven-stringed lyre, the lyre of the God. . . . It moves the worlds. Listen ! . . . Let its sound flow into your souls . . .

and the very heavens shall be opened unto you!

"Help for the weak, consolation for the suffering, hope for all! Woe to the wicked and profane, they shall be confounded. For in the ecstasy of the Mysteries each one sees into the depths of the other's soul; there the wicked are filled with terror and the profane are slain.

"And now that Dionysos has shone on you, I invoke all-powerful and heavenly Eros. May he be in your loves, your sorrows, and your joys. Love, for everything loves, Demons of the Abyss and Gods of the Ether alike. Love, for all creation loves. Love light, not darkness. During your journey remember the goal. When the souls return to light they bear on their sidereal body all the faults of their lives, like hideous stains. . . . To efface them, they must offer expiation and return to earth. . . . But the pure and strong enter the sun of Dionysos.

"And now chant the Evohé!"

"Evohé!" shouted the heralds at the four corners of the temple. "Evohé!" the cymbals resounded. "Evohé!" replied the enthusiastic crowd grouped on the steps of the sanctuary. The cry of Dionysos, the sacred summons to rebirth and life, rolled along the valley, repeated

by a thousand voices, and sent back by all the echoes of the mountains. And the shepherds guarding their flocks along the wild gorges of Ossa replied, "Evohé!"[1]

[1] The exclamation Evohé, pronounced *Hê: Vau: Hê*, was the sacred cry of all the initiates of Egypt, Judæa, Phœnicia, Asia Minor, and Greece. The four sacred letters, pronounced as follows: *Iod: Hê: Vau: Hê*, represented God in his eternal fusion with Nature, they embraced the totality of the Being, the living Universe. *Iod* (Osiris), signified the divinity properly called, the creative intellect, the *Eternal-Masculine*, who is in all, everywhere and above all. *Hê: Vau: Hê* represented the *Eternal-Feminine*, Eve, Isis, Nature, under every form visible and invisible, fecundated by him. The highest initiation, that of the theogonic sciences and the theurgic arts, corresponded to the letter *Jod*. Another order of sciences corresponded to each of the letters of Eve. Like Moses, Orpheus reserved the sciences corresponding to the letter *Jod* (Jove, Zeus, Jupiter), along with the idea of the unity of God, to the initiates of the first degree, and even sought to interest the people in them by means of poetry, the arts, and their living symbols. This is why the cry Evohé was openly proclaimed at the fêtes of Dionysos, to which were admitted, in addition to the initiates, the simple candidates to the Mysteries.

In this appears to be the entire difference between the work of Moses and that of Orpheus. Both start from Egyptian initiation, and are in possession of the same truth, though they apply it in opposite significations. Moses glorifies the Father, the male God, with the utmost severity and jealousy. He entrusts his charge to a restricted priesthood, and subjects the people to an implacable discipline, devoid of revelation. Orpheus, divinely attracted by the Eternal-Feminine, by Nature, glorifies it in the name of God, who penetrates it, and whom he wishes to cause to shine forth over a divine humanity. This is the reason the cry of Evohé became the sacred cry *par excellence* in all the mysteries of Greece.

CHAPTER IV

EVOCATION

THE fête had vanished like a dream; night had fallen. Dances, songs, and prayers had disappeared in a roseate mist. Orpheus and his disciple descended along a subterranean passage into a sacred crypt, which penetrated into the very heart of the mountain, and to which the hierophant alone had access. Here, the divinely inspired one gave himself up to meditation in utter solitude, or, aided by his adepts, followed out mighty works of magic and theurgy.

All around lay a vast cavernous space. A couple of torches, planted in the ground, dimly lit up its mirky depths and its walls filled with crevices. A few steps away there appeared in the ground a dark yawning cleft, from which issued a warm wind; this abyss seemed to descend to the very bowels of the earth. A small altar, on which a fire of dry laurel was burning, and a porphyry sphinx guarded the entrance. Far in the distance, at an immeasurable height, the cavern opened out

on to a sky, broken by an oblique fissure. This pale ray of bluish light seemed to be the very eye of the firmament plunging into the abyss.

"Thou hast drunk of the fountain of divine light," said Orpheus. "With undefiled heart hast thou penetrated into the inmost mysteries. The solemn hour has come for me to bring thee to the very fountain of life and light. Those who have not removed the dense veil which conceals invisible wonders from men's eyes have not become sons of the Gods.

"Listen now to truths which must not be told the mass of mortals, truths which give might to the sanctuaries.

"*God* is one and eternally unchangeable. He reigns over all. *The Gods* are diverse and innumerable, for divinity is eternal and infinite. The greatest are the souls of the constellations. Each constellation has its own suns and stars, earths and moons, and all issue from the celestial fire of Zeus, from the initial light. Half-conscious, inaccessible, and unchangeable, they govern the mighty whole by their unvarying movements. Each revolving constellation draws along in its ethereal sphere phalanxes of demi-gods or radiant souls who were formerly human, and who, after

descending the scale of kingdoms, have gloriously ascended the cycles, and finally issued from the round of generations. It is through these divine spirits that God breathes, acts, and manifests Himself; or, rather, these form the breath of His living soul, the rays of His eternal consciousness. They rule over armies of lower spirits which govern the elements; they control the universe. Far and near, they surround us, and, although of immortal essence, they assume ever-changing forms, according to nation, epoch, or region. The impious man who denies their existence still dreads them; the pious man worships without knowing them; the initiate knows, attracts, and sees them. I struggled to find them, braved death, and, as is said, descended into hell to tame the demons of the abyss, to summon the gods from on high to my beloved Greece, that lofty heaven might unite with earth, listening with delight to strains divine. Celestial beauty will become incarnate in the flesh of women, the fire of Zeus will run in the blood of heroes, and long before mounting to the constellations the sons of the Gods will shine forth like Immortals.

"Knowest thou what the Lyre of Orpheus is? The sound of inspired temples whose chords are the Gods. Greece will become attuned to their

music like a lyre, and the very marble will sing in brilliant cadence and celestial harmony.

"Now I will evoke my Gods, that they may appear living to thee; I will show thee in vision prophetic the mystic nuptials I am preparing for the world, a marriage that initiates will behold.

"Recline beneath the shelter of this rock, and fear not. A magic sleep will close thine eyelids; at first thou wilt tremble and see awful visions, but afterwards, a delightful glory, a feeling of happiness hitherto unknown, will drown thy senses and thine entire being."

The disciple cowered down into the niche which had been hollowed out in the rock in the form of a couch. Orpheus cast a few perfumes on the altar fire. Then, taking up his ebony sceptre, the top of which shone in flaming crystal, he stood close to the sphynx, and, in loud tones, began the invocation:

"Cybele! Cybele! Mighty mother, hear me! Primitive light, nimble and ethereal flame ever bounding through space and enfolding the echoes and images of all things, I summon thy thunderous chargers of light! O Universal Soul, who spreadest thyself over the vastnesses of space, and sowest suns in the firmament, leaving thy starry mantle, sweep through the ether, piercing through

hidden light invisible to eyes of flesh ! Great mother of Worlds and Gods, containing in thine essence the eternal types ! ancient Cybele, hear me ! By my magic sceptre, by my compact with the Powers, by the soul of Eurydice ! . . . I summon thee forth, a multiform, docile Bride, quivering beneath the fire of the eternal Male. From the loftiest heights and deepest depths, from every point in space, flow in and fill this cavern with thy effluvia ; surround the son of the Mysteries with a diamond rampart ; grant that he may behold in thy mighty bosom the Spirits of the Abyss, of Earth, and of Heaven."

At these words, a subterranean thunder-clap shook the pit to its depths, the whole mountain quaked. A cold perspiration covered the disciple's body. He saw Orpheus only through an ever-thickening mist. For a moment he tried to struggle against a mighty overmastering power, but his brain was rendered powerless, his will ineffectual. He experienced the terror of a drowning man, gulping down the deadly water, whose horrible convulsions close in the darkness of unconsciousness.

On returning to his senses, night was all around him, broken by a mirky, yellowish twilight. Long he gazed without seeing anything. From time to time he felt his skin gently razed as though by

invisible bats. Finally, he imagined he saw monstrous forms of centaurs, hydras, and gorgons move about in the darkness. The first object he saw distinctly, however, was a tall female figure sitting on a throne. She was enveloped in a long veil, with broad funereal folds strewn with pallid stars, and wore a wreath of poppies. Her immovable eyes kept continual watch. Masses of human shades like tired birds moved about her murmuring softly: "Queen of the dead, soul of the earth, O Persephone! We are the daughters of heaven. Wherefore are we exiled to this gloomy kingdom? Thou heavenly reaper, wherefore hast thou garnered in our souls which before flew about, happy in the light, amidst their sisters throughout the fields of ether?"

Persephone replied:

"I have plucked the narcissus, and entered the bridal bed. I have drunk death along with life, and, like you, am now groaning in darkness."

"When shall we be liberated?" groaned the souls.

"When my heavenly spouse, the divine deliverer, comes," replied Persephone.

Then a horde of terrible women appeared, with bloodshot eyes, and heads crowned with poisonous plants. Around their arms and semi-nude sides

twined serpents which they handled as whips. "Souls, spectres, larvæ!" they hissed, "believe not the insensate queen of the dead. We are the priestesses of the infernal regions, servants of the elements and monsters below; Bacchantes on earth, Furies in Tartarus. Unhappy souls, it is we who are your everlasting queens. You shall never leave the cursed circle of generations, we will drive you back with our scorpions. Be tortured eternally in the hissing embrace of our reptiles, in the folds of desire, of hatred, and remorse."

Thus speaking, with dishevelled hair, they flung themselves on the band of tortured souls, which began, with long painful groans, to writhe in the air beneath their lashes, like a whirlwind of dry leaves.

At this sight, Persephone grew pallid; she resembled a lunar phantom. She murmured: "Heaven! . . . Light! . . . The Gods! . . . a dream! . . . Sleep, eternal sleep!" Her crown of poppies faded away, and her eyes were closed in anguish. The queen of the dead fell on her throne in a state of lethargy . . . then everything disappeared in darkness.

The vision changed. The disciple of Delphi saw himself in a beautiful verdant valley, with Mount

Olympus in the distance. Before a dark cavern the beautiful Persephone was sleeping on a bed of flowers. A narcissus wreath replaced the crown of poppies, and the dawn of a new-born life spread an ambrosian tint over her cheeks. Her coal-black tresses fell on shoulders of dazzling whiteness, whilst her bosom, as it gently rose and fell, seemed to invite the embrace of the wind. Nymphs were dancing on the plain; small white clouds fleeting through the azure vault. Within a temple, the strains of a lyre could be heard.

In its golden strings and sacred harmony the disciple heard a universal music. From leaves and waves and caverns issued a tender incorporeal melody; the distant voices of women initiates singing their choruses in the mountains, reached his ear in broken cadences. Some of them, in despair, were calling on the God, the rest, half-dead with fatigue, as they fell on the outskirts of the forest, imagined they dimly perceived him.

Finally, in the zenith above, the glorious vault of azure opened, and from its bosom came forth a brilliant cloud. Like a bird hovering for a moment in the air, then descending to earth, the God who holds the thyrsus appeared before Persephone. He shone in glory with loosened locks, within his eyes rolled the sacred delirium of worlds yet to be born.

Long he gazed on her, then over her form he extended his thyrsus, which gently grazed her bosom, whereupon she began to smile. He touched her brow, she opened her eyes, slowly rose from her recumbent position, and fixed her gaze on her spouse. Those eyes, still drowned in the slumber of Erebus, began to shine like twin stars. "Dost thou recognise me?" said the God. "O Dionysos!" said Persephone, "Divine Spirit, Word of Jupiter, Celestial Light glowing in human form! Each time thou awakest me anew, I seem to live for the first time; worlds once more spring into being in my memory; both past and future become the immortal present, and I feel the whole universe glow within my heart!"

At the same time, above the mountains, the Gods appeared in silver-edged clouds, bending curiously towards the earth.

Down below, groups of men, women, and children, issuing from the vales and caverns, were gazing at the Immortals in celestial ecstasy. Glowing hymns of praise and clouds of incense arose from the temple. Between heaven and earth one of those nuptials which enable mothers to conceive heroes and Gods was being consummated. A ruddy glow had already spread over the whole scenery, and the queen of the dead, once more the

divine reaper, mounted to heaven, borne away in the arms of her spouse. A purple-tinted cloud surrounded them, and the lips of Dionysos touched the mouth of Persephone. . . . Thereupon a mighty cry of love arose from heaven and earth, as though the sacred whirl of emotion felt by the Gods as it passed over the great lyre were bent on tearing all its chords to pieces and scattering its music to the winds. At the same moment there flashed forth from the divine couple a very tornado of blinding light. . . . Then everything disappeared.

For a moment the disciple of Orpheus felt as though engulfed in the source of all that lives, immersed in the Sun of Being. Plunging into the incandescent brazier, he shot forth again with heavenly pinions, and like a lightning flash sped through the worlds to enter into the ecstatic sleep of the Infinite, once he had reached their limits.

On regaining his bodily senses, he found himself plunged in black night. Nothing but a luminous lyre broke the awful darkness. It fled away ever farther and farther and finally became a star. Then the disciple saw that he was in the crypt of the evocations, and that this luminous spot was the distant cleft in the cavern, opening out on the firmament.

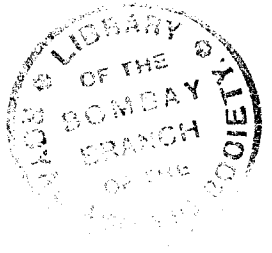
A great shadowy form was standing by his side.

He recognised Orpheus by his long wavy locks and the flashing crystal of his sceptre.

"Child of Delphi, whence comest thou?" said the hierophant.

"Master of the initiates, divine enchanter, marvellous Orpheus, I have dreamed a divine dream. Can it be a charm of magic, a gift of the Gods? What can have happened? Has the world changed? Where am I now?"

"Thou hast gained the crown of initiation and hast lived my dream, immortal Greece! Now let us leave this spot, for I must die and thou live, that my dream be brought to pass."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CHAPTER V

THE DEATH OF ORPHEUS

ALONG the slope of Mount Kaoukaion the oak forests moaned beneath the fury of the storm; the thunder growled again and again on the bare rocks, causing the very foundations of the Temple of Jupiter to quake. The priests of Zeus had assembled in a vaulted crypt of the sanctuary, where they formed a semicircle, seated on their bronze chairs. Orpheus stood in their midst, like a prisoner at the bar. He was paler than usual, though a flame of light shone from his tranquil eyes.

The oldest of the priests then spoke in the sober accents of a judge.

"Orpheus, thou who art called Apollo's son, we have appointed thee pontiff and king, and given thee the mystic sceptre of the sons of God; by priestly and royal act, thou reignest over Thrace. In this country thou hast restored the temples of Jupiter and Apollo, and caused the divine son of Dionysos to shine out on the night of mystery. Still, art thou well aware of what threatens us?

Thou, who knowest awful secrets, who, more than once, hast forecast the future, and spoken from afar to thy disciples, appearing to them in dreams, yet knowest not what is happening all around thee. In thine absence the wild Bacchantes and cursed priestesses have assembled in the vale of Hecate. Under the leadership of Aglaonice, the Thessalian sorceress, they have persuaded the chiefs on the banks of the Ebro to restore the worship of black Hecate, and are now threatening to destroy the temples of the male Gods and all the altars of the Most High. Roused by their ardent appeals, and led on by their seditious torches, a thousand Thracian warriors are now encamped at the foot of this mountain. To-morrow they intend to storm the temple, spurred on by these women clad in panther skins and eager for men's blood. Aglaonice, high-priestess of dark Hecate, is at their head. She is the most terrible of magicians, as desperate and implacable as a Fury. Thou must know her; what hast thou to say?"

"I knew that all this was to come to pass," said Orpheus.

"Then wherefore hast thou effected nought in our defence? Aglaonice has sworn to slay us on our altars, before the living heaven we worship. What will become of this temple and its treasures,

what will become of thy science and of Zeus himself if thou abandonest thy post?"

"Am I not with you?" replied Orpheus gently.

"Thou art indeed with us, but thou hast come too late," said the old man. "Aglaonice is at the head of the Bacchantes, and the latter are leading on the Thracians. Wilt thou repulse them with Jupiter's bolt and Apollo's arrows? Wherefore didst thou not summon here such Thracian chiefs as were faithful to Zeus, to put down this revolt?"

"It is not by arms but by words that the Gods are defended. It is not the chiefs who are to be struck down, but rather the Bacchantes. Be not anxious, I will go alone. No profane person shall enter this place. To-morrow the reign of the bloodthirsty priestesses shall be at an end. Rest assured, ye who tremble before Hecate's horde, the celestial and solar Gods shall triumph. To thee, old man, who didst doubt me, I leave the pontiff's sceptre and the hierophant's crown."

"What wilt thou do?" asked the old man in terror.

"I am about to return to the Gods. . . . There I will meet you again. Farewell!"

Thereupon Orpheus quitted the hall, leaving the priests mute in their seats. In the temple he found the disciple of Delphi, whom he seized forcibly by the hand, saying:

"I am going to the camp of the Thracians; follow me!"

They journeyed together beneath the oaks; the tempest was now afar off, and stars shone amid the thick branches.

"The hour of death for me has now come," said Orpheus. "Others have understood, but thou hast loved me. Eros is the most ancient of the gods, the initiates say; he holds the key to all that is. Accordingly I have shown thee the innermost of all Mysteries, the Gods have spoken to thee, thou hast seen them! . . . And now, alone with thee, far from the sight of men, Orpheus at the hour of death must leave to his beloved disciple the key to his destiny, the immortal inheritance, the pure torch of his soul."

"Master! I am listening. I will obey thee!" said the disciple of Delphi.

"We must continue," said Orpheus, "along this descending footpath. Time is pressing. I wish to take my enemies by surprise. As thou followest, listen, engrave my words in thy memory, but keep them secret."

"They are being printed in letters of fire on my heart; the ages shall not efface them," was the reply.

"Thou knowest that the soul is the daughter of

heaven. Thou hast contemplated thy origin and end, and art beginning to remember. When the soul descends into the flesh, it continues, though feebly, to receive the influx from on high. It is through our mothers that this powerful breath reaches us first. The milk of their breasts nourishes our bodies, but our real being, distressed by the stifling prison of the body, is fed by their soul. My mother was a priestess of Apollo; my earliest recollection is that of a sacred wood, a solemn temple, and a woman bearing me in her arms, her soft silky hair enveloping me as with a warm garment. Terrestrial objects and human faces filled me with a feeling of frightful horror. But when my mother pressed me to her breast, her eyes met mine, filling me with a divine remembrance of heaven. This ray of light, however, perished in the sombre grey of earth. One day my mother disappeared; she was dead. Bereft of her look of love, and deprived of her caresses, I was terrified at my loneliness. Seeing blood flow during a sacrifice, I conceived a feeling of horror for the temple, and descended into the gloomy valleys below.

"The Bacchantes were amazed at my youthful form. At that time Aglaonice ruled over those fierce voluptuous women, and all, men and women

alike, dreaded her. A dark spirit of desire seemed to emanate from her person, filling one with fear. This Thessalian woman exercised a fatal attraction over all who came near her. By the arts of infernal Hecate she attracted youthful maidens to her haunted valley, instructing them in the rites of her cult. Aglaonice had cast her eyes on Eurydice. For this virgin she had conceived an evil desire, an unbridled, malignant passion. She wished to lead on this young girl to the cult of the Bacchantes, to subdue her, and, after blighting her youthful beauty, to hand her over to the infernal genii. Even now she had cast around Eurydice her seductive promises and mighty incantations.

"Attracted, myself, by a presentiment impossible to explain, to the vale of Hecate, I was one day making my way through the lofty grass of a meadow, filled with venomous plants. All around lay the horrible gloomy woods, haunted by the Bacchantes. Clouds of perfumes came to me like the warm breath of desire. I perceived Eurydice slowly walking along in the direction of a cave, as though attracted by some invisible impulse. She did not see me. At times a faint peal of laughter, then again a strange sound of sighing, would proceed from the woods of the Bacchantes. Eurydice

quivered and stopped, uncertain whether to continue or not; then she resumed her walk, impelled by some indescribable magic power. Her golden locks sported over her white shoulders, and a look of heaven-born enthusiasm appeared in her beautiful narcissus-coloured eyes as she approached the mouth of Hell. Seeing the light in her eyes, I now exclaimed, as I took her by the hand: 'Eurydice! Where art thou going?' As though awaking from a dream, she uttered a cry at once of terror and deliverance, and fell on my breast. It was at this moment that divine Eros overpowered us, and, by a single look, Eurydice-Orpheus were united for ever.

"And yet Eurydice in her fright still clinging to me, pointed with terrified gesture to the grotto. Drawing near, I saw a woman in a sitting attitude. It was Aglaonice. Close by was a small wax statue of Hecate, painted red, white, and black, holding a spinning-wheel on her knees. She was muttering some enchanted words as she turned the magic wheel, and her eyes, fixed on empty space, seemed to be devouring her prey. I broke the wheel into pieces, and trampled the Hecate under foot, then, fixing a steady look on the enchantress, I exclaimed: 'By Jupiter! I command thee, under penalty of death, to think no more of Eurydice!

For I would have thee know that the sons of Apollo fear thee not.'

"Aglaonice, abashed and amazed, twisted about like a serpent beneath my threat and disappeared into her cavern, after casting on me a look of mortal hatred.

"I conducted Eurydice to the entrance of my temple. The virgins of the Ebro, crowned with hyacinth, chanted in unison: 'Hymen! Hymenaea!' all around us. And now I knew the meaning of happiness.

"The moon had only thrice completed her orb when a Bacchante, obedient to the will of the Thessalian, offered Eurydice a goblet of wine, which would give her, so she said, all knowledge of philters and magic herbs. Eurydice was inquisitive, drank it, and fell to the ground like a log. A deadly poison was contained in the cup.

"When I saw the funeral pile consume Eurydice, when I beheld the tomb swallow up her ashes, and the final trace of her living form disappear, I exclaimed: 'Where is her soul?' I set out in the blackness of despair and wandered over the whole of Greece. I asked the priests of Samothrace to summon her back; I sought her in the bowels of the earth, at Cape Tenarus, but unavailingly. Finally, I reached the cave of Tro-

phonius. There, certain priests lead rash visitors through a narrow passage to the lakes of fire boiling and foaming in the bowels of the earth, showing them what is taking place there. On the way, as one proceeds, one enters into an ecstatic state, and second sight is given. Breathing is difficult, the voice is choked, and it is possible to speak only by signs. Some return when half the distance is traversed, the rest continue and perish from suffocation—the majority of such as return alive remain mad until death. After seeing what no mouth is permitted to repeat, I returned to the grotto and sank into a profound lethargy. During this death-like sleep Eurydice appeared before me. She was floating in a nimbus, pale as a lunar ray, and she said to me: 'For me thou hast braved the infernal regions, seeking me among the dead. Here I am at the call of thy voice; it is not the bosom of the earth I inhabit, but rather the region of Erebus, the cone of shade between earth and moon. Sorrowing like thyself, I continually whirl round and round in this limbus. If thou wilt deliver me, save Greece by giving her light. Then I, finding my wings once more, shall rise to the stars, and thou wilt find me again in the light of the Gods. Until then, I must move in a circle

of grief and trouble. . . .' Thrice I attempted to seize her, thrice she disappeared from my arms like a phantom. I heard nothing but a sound resembling a breaking chord, then a voice, gentle as a breath, sad as a farewell kiss, murmured: 'Orpheus!'

"I awoke. This name, given me by a soul, had changed my being, and I felt the sacred thrill of an immense desire and the power of a superhuman love enter me. Eurydice, living, would have afforded me the intoxication of happiness; Eurydice dead, caused me to find Truth. It is through Love that I have taken on myself the linen garb, consecrating myself to the great initiation and the ascetic life; through Love that I have penetrated the secrets of magic and sought divine knowledge; through Love that I have crossed the caverns of Samothrace, the wells of the Pyramids, and the tombs of Egypt. I have searched death to find life therein, and beyond life I have seen the limbi, souls and transparent spheres, the Ether of the Gods. Earth has opened for me her abysses, and heaven its gleaming temples. I have uprooted the science concealed beneath the mummies. The priests of Isis and of Osiris have delivered up their secrets to me. They had only these Gods, I had Eros! By him I spoke, sang

and conquered; by him I spelled out the word of Hermes, and that of Zoroaster; by him I pronounced the name of Jupiter and that of Apollo!

"And now has come the hour for the confirmation of my mission by death. Once more I must descend to hell, in order to mount to heaven. Listen, beloved child! Thou wilt bear my doctrine to the temple of Delphi, and my law to the tribunal of the Amphyctions. Dionysos is the sun of the initiates; Apollo will be the light of Greece; the Amphyctions the guardians of his justice."

The hierophant and his disciple had reached the bottom of the valley. Before them stretched a glade, mighty groves of sombre woods, tents, and men sleeping on the ground. In the depths of the forest might be seen dying embers and flickering torches. Orpheus walked calmly into the midst of the tired Thracians, who were sleeping off the effects of a nocturnal orgy. A sentinel, still awake, demanded his name.

"I am a messenger of Apollo; summon thy chiefs," replied Orpheus.

"A priest of the temple!" This cry, raised by the sentinel, spreads throughout the camp like an alarm signal. They arm themselves and call aloud to one another, swords glitter, and the chieftains in astonishment surround the pontiff.

"Who art thou? Wherefore hast thou come here?"

"I am an envoy from the temple. Renounce this struggle, all of you—kings, chieftains, and warriors of Thrace—against the sons of light; recognise the divinity of Jupiter and of Apollo. The Gods above are now addressing you through me. I come as a friend if you will listen to me, but as a judge if you refuse."

"Speak!" said the chieftains.

Standing in the shade of a mighty elm, Orpheus began. He spoke of the benefits the Gods bestow, of the charm of heavenly light, that pure life he had passed above with his initiate brothers beneath the eye of the great Ouranos, and which he wished to communicate to all men; he promised to abolish discord and strife, to cure the sick, to teach them those seeds which produce the finest fruits of the earth, and those still more precious seeds which produce the divine fruits of life: joy, love, and beauty. And, as he spoke, his grave though gentle voice quivered, like the strings of a lyre, ever piercing more deeply into the hearts of the wavering Thracians. From the depths of the woods, the Bacchantes, with torches in hand, had also come to gratify their curiosity, attracted by the music of a human voice. Scantily clad in panthers' skins,

they came to show their dark gleaming bosoms and superb forms. By the light of the nocturnal torches their eyes could be seen shining with cruel lascivious gleam. Gradually lulled to a state of quiet and peace by the voice of Orpheus, they formed a group around him, or sat at his feet like tamed beasts. Some, overcome by remorse, fixed their eyes on the ground, whilst the rest listened in ravished ecstasy. The Thracians, moved by the sight, murmured to one another: "This is a God speaking to us. It is Apollo himself, charming the Bacchantes!"

All this while, Aglaonice, who had come from the deepest recesses of the forest, was keeping secret watch. The high-priestess of Hecate, seeing the motionless Thracians and the Bacchantes enchained by a magic more powerful than her own, was conscious of the triumph of heaven over hell, and, as she listened to the divine seducer, felt her accursed power fade away into the darkness from which it had sprung. With a cry of rage she flung herself in front of Orpheus.

"A God, you say? I tell you, this is Orpheus, a man like yourselves, a sorcerer who is deceiving you, a tyrant usurping your crowns. A God, you say? Apollo's son? He? The priest? The haughty pontiff? Fling yourselves upon him!

If he be God, let him defend himself . . . and if I lie, may I be torn to pieces!"

Aglaonice was followed by a few chieftains whom she had inflamed with hatred and excited by her devilish spells. They threw themselves upon the hierophant. With a loud cry Orpheus fell, pierced by their swords. Holding out his hands to his disciple, he said:

"I die, but the Gods live for ever!"

Thus speaking, he gave up the ghost. Leaning over his corpse, the sorceress of Thessaly, whose countenance now resembled that of Tisiphone, was awaiting the prophet's last breath with savage joy, and preparing to draw an oracle from her victim. What was her dismay, however, to see this corpse-like head return to life beneath the flickering light of the torch. A faint colour entered into the dead man's face, his eyes once more opened wide, and a gentle though terrible look was fixed upon her . . . whilst a strange voice . . . the voice of Orpheus . . . once more came from those trembling lips, distinctly uttering the melodious and avenging syllables:

"Eurydice!"

Before this look and voice the priestess stepped back in terror, exclaiming:

"He is not dead! They will follow me for-ever! Orpheus! Eurydice!"

Aglaonice then took to flight as though a hundred Furies were following her, lash in hand. The dismayed Bacchantes, and the Thracians, overwhelmed with horror at the crime they had committed, fled into the black night, shrieking aloud in their distress.

The disciple was left alone by the body of his master. A sinister ray from Hecate lit up at the same time the bleeding linen and the pale face of the mighty initiate, whilst from the very valleys and rivers, from forest and mountain, there seemed to proceed a doleful strain as though issuing from one immense lyre.

The body of Orpheus was burned by the priests, and his ashes borne away to a distant sanctuary of Apollo, where they were venerated with the reverence that had been given to the God himself. None of the rebels dared mount to the temple of Kaoukaion. The tradition of Orpheus, his science and mysteries, were there perpetuated and spread throughout all the temples of Jupiter and Apollo. The Greek poets said that Apollo had become jealous of Orpheus because the latter was invoked more frequently than himself. The truth is, that whilst the poets sang of Apollo, the great initiates invoked the soul of Orpheus, the deity of salvation and of divination.

At a later date the Thracians, converted to the religion of Orpheus, related that he had descended into hell to seek the soul of his spouse, and that the Bacchantes, jealous of his eternal love, had torn him to pieces, but that his head, though flung into the Ebro, and carried off by the stormy waves of the river, still uttered the plaintive moan: "Eurydice! Eurydice!"

Thus the Thracians proclaimed as a prophet the one they had killed as a criminal, who had converted them by his death. Thus also the Orphic word mysteriously filtered into the veins of Greece, through the secret paths of initiation and of the sanctuaries. Just as, within the temple, a chorus of initiates became attuned to the sounds of an invisible lyre, so also the Gods became attuned to his voice . . . and the soul of Orpheus became the soul of Greece.

THE END

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